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Representation of Women's Education in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price*: A Critical Study

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Abstract:

Buchi Emecheta's novel *The Bride Price* reflects women's education in a crucial way. Education is the process of learning or acquiring of knowledge, beliefs, habits, skills and values (Wikipedia). It illuminates the mind and helps in all round development of an individual as well as society. Emecheta believes that Education helps in the development of a community, in building a family and also it helps in women's emancipation. Therefore, she supports equal education for all. But there are still many obstacles in educating a girl child which have been highlighted in the novel.

The paper is an attempt to critically analyse the theme of women's education as represented by Buchi Emecheta in her novel *The Bride Price*. It will focus on women's education as represented in the novel through various male and female characters and their different and opposing attitudes towards education. This study is significant because education helps in the eradication of gender discrimination, social differences like, caste and race and traditional constraints to gender equality; moreover, it helps in family and community building.

Key Words: Women's education, women's emancipation, bride price, gender discrimination and social differences.

Introduction:

Women's education in Africa is an important issue which we find in most of the African women's writings. Writers like Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Mariama Ba, Ama Ata Aidoo and others reflect education as a major thematic concern in their novels. Even Chinua Achebe deals with education, and when he talks about educating his people he means that the African people should regain pride in themselves, their past and their future which he mentions in his essay "The Novelist as Teacher". Achebe's very desire as a novelist is "to help his society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement" (Achebe 44) or racial inferiority. His purpose is to teach his readers that their past- with all its imperfections- was not one long night of savagery. He wants his people to honour their cultural heritage and traditions even though they accept modernity. He is not talking specifically about women. If we read his novels, we find that his earlier novels portray women as weak, voiceless and docile but he developed a gradual change in his later works where some of the women characters began to question the patriarchal system.

On the other hand, Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Ba, Flora Nwapa and Ama Ata Aidoo also talk about the African society, its culture and tradition but mainly they focus on the lives of women and women's contribution in building the family and society. These writers began to subvert the male writers' portrayal of women where traditional beliefs and customs constructed and directed a woman and the traditional system caged a woman under its boundary as a prisoner by renewing the women characters as fighters and challengers. They talk about the gender inequality that prevails in the African society which hinders a female child in availing the educational rights and other human rights. These women novelists portray the sufferings and struggles that the African women face in their society in a vivid way; be it patriarchal, sexual or racial. They are successful in forecasting the realistic picture that their fellow sisters face which was also once experienced by most of the writers personally. Thus, the African women novelists give importance to education because it helps them to liberate themselves and walk equally with their male counterparts in every aspect.

African literature gives us the clear picture of African women where we come across various types of projection of women characters. Most of the writings portray women as wives, mothers and daughters who were busy in their domestic works serving their husbands, bringing up their children and supporting the family by sacrificing their own happiness and dreams. Women were often treated as properties by their husbands, producers of many children; if a woman could give birth to a son she earned more respect from the family and society. African male writers mostly portray man as brave, tall, huge and strong with warrior like qualities such as Achebe's Okonkwo and if a man lacks such qualities then he will not be called a man as we find in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) where Okonkwo is ashamed of his son Nwoye and considers him degenerate and effeminate. Women writers like Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta and others correct this type of gender stereotype.

We have Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) and the title itself suggests an ironic presentation of motherhood and its consequent desire for happiness. The novel also portrays a different male character- Nnaife Owulum; who serves to subvert the general idea of African men as- huge, tall, strong and brave who can fight several battles and lead the community, but Nnaife is short, small and ugly who works as a laundry man in a white man's house. The African women writers started creating several characters who served as wives, mothers, sisters and daughters yet questioned certain norms of the society and were economically independent and industrious. They began to view women in a different way and reinnovated their creation by giving the women a female voice and used education as a tool to empower and emancipate the women characters.

Flora Nwapa is one of the African women writers who brought a new dawn to African women literature. Her writings depict new images of women characters. She is the first African women novelist to be published in English. Generally, if we go through the earlier African novels we find that African women were expected to be fertile who could produce many children and bring them up at the same time. But she has created such female characters who defy this norm of fertility. Her first novel *Efuru* (1966) deals with the theme of barrenness. Efuru was beautiful, intelligent, and hard working; she showed her courage and asserted her individual freedom by marrying the man without the dowry but she was

barren. Yet Nwapa does not show Efuru as a weak and defeated character, instead, she portrays her as an independent and strong-willed who never looked back even though she failed in her two marriages; she could continue her life remaining single and came back to her father's house without compromising with her husband. She was different from other women in the novel in thoughts, speech and action. The novel also deals with many other issues which are related to the central character Efuru. Although Efuru was not educated but she was smart and intelligent who could run a family easily and even lend money to others. Though Nwapa in this novel has not dealt predominantly with education yet we find it blended within the major issues. We can see that Efuru's second husband Gilbert is an educated young man, but he considers educating a girl as wastage of money, like Iloba in *The Bride Price*. In addition to that, we can see the influence of education and scientific medicines overtaking the local *dibia* (medicine man) as Efuru sends Nnona to the doctor for surgery of her leg. Efuru was such a woman who was wise and possessed many qualities which made her no less than an educated woman; she can be called as a 'new woman'. Flora Nwapa's other novels also deal with the issue of barrenness and besides this theme she also talks about education, marriage, gender, tradition and African culture.

Mariama Ba is one such example who deals with women's education. In her novella *So Long a Letter* (1981) she reveals the bitter oppression and sufferings faced by women. Ramatoulaye and Aissatou both the women characters suffer in their marital lives. The story interweaves the themes of polygamy in the Senegalese society, patriarchal restraints in women's lives and how education helps Ramatoulaye and Aissatou to fight the oppressions faced by them. Ramatoulaye is an educated woman who is a teacher, she writes to her friend Aissatou who lives in the USA. Both the women struggled in their lives, they had to suffer due to polygamy and because their husbands married other women they were no longer given importance by their husbands. Ramatoulaye and Aissatou had to take care of themselves and their children. The novel is in the form of epistle which indicates the process of writing; being an educated woman Ramatoulaye could write to her friend who lives abroad, writing became a process of relief for Ramatoulaye and it served to establish her voice. We can also find the theme of female solidarity in the novel; Ba tries to indicate female bonding as a means of support in the time of distress and as a tool to resist the male oppression and also patriarchal oppression.

Mariama Ba is a Senegalese writer whereas, Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta are Nigerians, although the cultural setting of a Senegalese society is different from that of a Nigerian society, yet, there are many similarities that the women communities face, therefore, they could sense the importance of education for women. All the three writers have discussed the theme of education in their writings and successfully represented its importance.

The paper is an attempt to critically analyse the theme of women's education as represented by Buchi Emecheta in her novel *The Bride Price*. It will focus on women's education as reflected in the novel through various male and female characters and their different and opposing attitudes towards education. This study is significant because education helps in the eradication of gender discrimination, social differences like, caste and

race and traditional constraints to gender equality; moreover, it helps in family and community building.

Buchi Emecheta was born to Igbo parents in a small village near Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, in 1944. She moved to Britain with her husband in 1962, studied Sociology at the University of London, and worked in a library and later as a community worker, while bringing up her five children. She has also been a teacher and visiting professor of English at several universities in the United States, Britain, and Nigeria. She lives in North London. Emecheta's writings give us a powerful impression of what it means to be a woman and mother in the Nigerian society; her novels reflect her personal experiences of life. *The Bride Price* (1976) and *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) show how the traditions of African society affect the lives of women. Emecheta believes that education helps in the development of a community and she very much encourages women's education because she believes that "if one educates a woman, one educates a community, but if one educates a man, one educates a man" (Emecheta 553). According to Emecheta, women's education helps in building a family and also it helps in women's emancipation. Therefore, she supports equal education for all; boys and girls, men and women. But there are still many obstacles in educating a girl child which have been highlighted in her novels.

Akunna, the central character of the novel *The Bride Price* attempts to learn and be educated. After the death of her father, according to the African custom, her uncle, Okonkwo Odia, inherits everything his brother owned, even the children and Ma Blackie; Akunna's mother, thus, he looks after Akunna's family. He provides education to Akunna only with a personal motive so as to gain a good bride price from her future husband; Akunna's uncle dreams to be the chief of the village utilising the money. Women's education in this context serves to be a means to attain male domination, to fulfil patriarchal requirements or ambitions. We can see that Akunna's uncle's eldest son, Iloba, objects with Akunna's education because she is a girl; this is an example of gender inequality. Emecheta presents gender discrimination in the novel which is a serious issue in the Nigerian society. But Akunna's mother provides education to both of her children. Even though her husband dies she works hard to educate her son and daughter and has a dream to make them someone capable of leading their lives in the society. Role of a mother in women's education is one of the important themes that is reflected. Emecheta also shows how education helps to eradicate the social differences and portrays the union between Akunna and Chike, belonging to two different groups. Akunna defies the traditional norms by marrying Chike, who comes from the family of the slave category, she herself belonging to free born family; thus, she bridges the gap between the slave and the free family. She is able to emancipate herself by doing so. She fights like a wild animal when Okoboshi; a suitor from the village, kidnapped her and tried to touch her. She thought that no one could help her, she must look after herself. This determines her independence and establishes the female voice. It is because of education that Akunna could choose her own way. Education played a vital role in her life which is very much necessary in the Nigerian society and the African society at large which Emecheta tries to show in her novel *The Bride Price*.

Emecheta also deals with the theme of slavery in the novel which is a crucial issue in African literature and African history. In *The Bride Price* it is the distinction between the free (Diala) born family and the slave (Osu) family. The people who belonged to the Osu category were regarded as sub-human beings, unclean class or slaves. The ancestors of the slave family were once slaves who were sacrificed to please the gods in Igbo community to maintain order and smooth functioning of the natural world. People attained Osu status by marriage and inheritance. Some people who were weak deliberately sacrificed themselves to serve the deities or gods; they sought favour and protection from their gods. These people lived separately near the deities or shrines. Earlier the Osus were respected and revered and common people restrained themselves from communicating the Osus because it would defile the Osus. Social interaction, marriages and any mode of communication was forbidden. But gradually their position in the society began to change and discrimination increased, people started to regard the Osus as outcasts, untouchables and worthless. The novel reveals that Akunna defies this rigid practice of caste system and stands as a challenger; she challenges the traditional custom of social difference and vehemently protests this by marrying Chike Ofulue.

Buchi Emecheta and Women's Education: A Critical Study of *The Bride Price*:

History and literary writings reflect women as the victims of gender discrimination, racial differences and traditional norms in almost every society. Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* comes with new insight where she values education and interrogates certain traditional norms that regulate the individual's life and society. She gave voice to her female character by means of education. Social difference is one of the aspects in the novel; Akunna the protagonist of the novel belongs to free born family whereas, Chike, Akunna's lover belongs to the family who were once slaves. Thus, their relationship was forbidden but Akunna defies the traditional law and elopes with Chike. Emecheta gave voice to Akunna but it was limited, she did not allow her protagonist to liberate totally, it was tradition which confined her complete freedom, Akunna and the people of her village believed that Akunna succumbed to death because of the unpaid bride price, but the truth is that she was weak and immature to give birth to a baby at her early age. Akunna could not overcome this traditional belief, by constructing such a character Emecheta is able to show that tradition is not an easy obstacle to overcome. We see the rigid mindsets of the Ibo people who do not change their opinions and such beliefs lead them to perform various evil activities. However, Emecheta leaves a hint of hope that education can eradicate such social evils. She uses her omniscient narrator who asserts that all such traditional beliefs are meaningless and a safe birth does not depend on a bride price. Emecheta thus, challenges the traditional beliefs and practices; she interrogates the continuing old native tradition and opens up a way for the readers to think the other causes of Akunna's death- perhaps, Akunna would not have died if she would have taken better care of her physical health during her childhood and also if Chike and Akunna would have planned for the child after some years.

The first page of the novel itself gives us a description of school going and learning through the character portrayal of Nna-nndo; brother of Akunna: "Nna-nndo was eleven. He was a tall boy for his age. At school he was just starting to write with ink, and he was proud

of this" (Emecheta 1). The lines indicate that Nna-nndo was happy with his school life; reading and writing, he was proud of learning how to write with ink. Nna-nndo and Akunna both were sent to school but Nna-nndo was given more importance being a son whom we can observe several times throughout the novel; one such example is; during the funeral of Akunna's father a woman said that Akunna will be married off quickly then her bride price will pay for Nna-nndo's education. This implies that the son is more precious than the daughter and his education is more important than educating the daughter, in this process of educating the male child the daughter has to sacrifice herself and she is used as a tool to fulfil the patriarchal requirements. However, Ma-Blackie, mother of Akunna and Nna-nndo provided education to both of them even after the death of her husband. Nna-nndo is obedient to Akunna as a brother and he supports Akunna's going to school. He also supported Chike and Akunna's relationship and always trusted Chike, Nna-nndo never looked Chike as a descendant of slave family because at school he learned the white man's ways of equality in the sight of God. Nna-nndo helped Akunna to free herself from Okoboshi's bondage, he believed that Chike will save his sister from Okoboshi's bondage and Chike will never harm her. Nna-nndo later stayed together at Ughelli with Akunna and Chike and availed higher education.

Secondly, we can perceive women's education in the novel by critically studying the various female characters. Akunna is the central character of the novel who is very much fond of learning. She is intelligent, nice and quiet, not ugly but was often ill. From the beginning of the novel we find her as a good girl, obedient to her parents and though she had several doubts and questions in her mind she never asked her parents because she agreed that well-brought-up Nigerian children should not ask questions, instead, accept everything which is a sign of respect to their parents and elders, this indicates the Nigerian tradition. After the death of her father her normal life changed, she had to move to Ibuza from Lagos with her mother and brother; a shift from the old world to the new where she encountered many problems that she never thought before. Her father had talked of sending her to college, but after his death her only wish is to get her school education and certificate because her uncle would not send her for higher education. She even knew that very soon she will be married off and her bride price will help Nna-nndo to attain education. This reflects the Nigerian society where young girls like Akunna have to discontinue their study because they are not supported by their parents; gender disparity still prevails in the society which is the reason behind lack of education and the latter leads to poverty, starvation, immature marriages, death of young women during child birth and various inequalities. Though Akunna was good at book learning and she had a desire to be independent and educated but her society would not allow her. Akunna and her brother learnt many things at school and when they came home they encountered the countless, unchanging traditions of their own people, thus, they were caught between the two sets of traditions.

Gradually, Akunna began to feel lonely because her mother was hoping for Okonkwo's baby and she needed piece of mind and quiet time, so, Chike, Akunna's teacher could replace this loneliness, he became her support, encouragement and strength. Akunna got inspiration from Chike and a time came when she stood to question the norms of the

society, she could bear no more and took a drastic step of escaping from Okoboshi's bondage and uniting with Chike. She fought with Okoboshi and even kicked and scratched him. She laughed like a mad woman, and shouted at him, all these indicate her defensive nature and revolt against patriarchy or sexual harassment. Her statement in the novel shows how she stigmatized herself as if she is no more virgin in order not to submit herself to Okoboshi: "You think I am a virgin? I tell you, a better man has been here before you! I have slept with him many, many times. That afternoon in school, when you and your friends made me cry—that was our first time. But it didn't do my schoolwork any harm, did it? You failed your examination, but I passed!" (63).

She made a false assertion by creating a story of her own, in this way she could liberate herself and break the tradition. This implies orality or story telling as a tool to subvert the various types of oppression women face. By creating a story of her own and telling it to Okoboshi and all the members present at his home she could establish her voice. If we look into the women's history or specifically African history, we can find that women were great storytellers and later they began to use this art of storytelling as a medium of expression and as a weapon to fight back against different types of oppression, be it colonial, racial, patriarchal or sexual. Storytelling also serves as a psychological remedial which reduces stress, anger and anxiety. Emecheta herself agrees with this point and in her essay "Feminism with a Small 'f'!" she comments that she is an ordinary writer who has to write, because if she didn't write she thinks that she would have to be put in an asylum. Thus, she continued to cultivate her skill of storytelling or writing and was successful in dealing with various issues of women and without education it would not have been possible for her which she tries to show through her character Akunna. Akunna later married to Chike and lived happily; she also taught in a school and also supported her brother to pursue his higher education. Emecheta was successful in representing the woman's contribution in building the family and the society which the Nigerian feminists support; they support women's struggle for rights and at the same time give importance in building the family and leading the younger generation towards progress and prosperity.

Ma Blackie is one of the female characters who supports women's education. She herself was educated by the white men and she provided education to Akunna and Nna-nndo. After the death of her husband she earned money to look after her children and pay for Akunna's education. She also promised Akunna to teach in a school before marrying, but after the death of her husband she was inherited by Okonkwo and she could no longer spend much time with Akunna, thus, Akunna became hopeless thinking about her future; without the support of her mother she could not attain higher education and Akunna knew that her mother could not refuse Okonkwo if he disagrees Akunna's going to college. This highlights the limit of a woman in the Nigerian traditional society, Ma Blackie tried her best to provide her children equal education but finally, she also became the victim of tradition. She has to remain within the boundary, after her husband's death she became just like a property that was inherited by Okonkwo, so, she ultimately loses her individuality.

We have other women characters like Ngbeke, Okonkwo's Number One wife and Ogugua, their daughter and also Aunt Uzo who unlike Akunna and Ma Blackie supported

patriarchy. Ngbeke was jealous of Ma Blackie and her daughter Akunna because they were independent to some extent, Ma Blackie earned herself and looked after her children, Ngbeke could not maintain her superiority in front of Ma Blackie being a senior wife, and moreover, Ma Blackie was handsome and intelligent. Ngbeke did not send her children to school and she might be jealous because Akunna would get more bride price than Ogugua because of her education. Her daughter Ogugua also did not give any importance to education because in their society only the slaves or the descendants of slave family were sent to white men's school. Ogugua knew all the customs of her community and she explained Akunna that her father Okonkwo had inherited everything Akunna's father owned, and he had also inherited Akunna, Nna-nndo and Akunna's mother. These reflect the attitudes and thoughts of Ngbeke and Ogugua towards education and the social system. Aunt Uzo is one more example who is similar to Ngbeke and Ogugua, during the funeral ceremony of Akunna's father she helped Akunna to perform all the requisite norms along with the neighbours, Akunna was encouraged to cry more and more because she was a girl. The women believed that Akunna will be married off soon and her bride price will educate Nna-nndo. During a conversation aunt Uzo responded in this way: "She's not ugly, and she's nice and quiet and intelligent. Any educated man will be glad to pay a good price for her" (17).

These lines indicate the commodification of a girl or a woman, Akunna's beauty, intelligence and good nature are equated with money, just as we don't hesitate to pay a good price for a good quality product, similarly, Akunna can expect a good price in the marriage market according to aunt Uzo. All the three female characters discussed above stand for patriarchal system, they resemble those section of women who help in carrying on the rigid conventions of the society. African women are therefore marginalised sexually, racially and patriarchally.

Among the male characters Okonkwo plays the dominant role in exercising patriarchal power. He is the elder brother of Ezekiel Odi and after Ezekiel's death he owns everything his brother owned, even his children and wife. He does not give any importance to education and none of his children is provided education. His sole ambition is to be the chief of the village; an Obi. To be an Obi he has to offer large and expensive gifts to the gods, in return he will receive the red hat which is the mark of the chief, and celebrations take place, even according to their custom they need to sacrifice a slave, all these cost a huge amount of money. Therefore, Okonkwo plans to derive money from Akunna and his daughter's weddings, he was just waiting for the right time to marry them off and their bride price would automatically come to him. Akunna was educated so he knew that she will get a good bride price. He was not interested in Akunna's education despite being her guardian and it was Ma Blackie who paid for Akunna's education, but when his requirement arises he is ready to send Akunna to anybody, be it the cruel and violent Okoboshi. Okonkwo is the perfect example of a dominant man who is ready to marry off his daughters in their early age for his personal benefits. He is the embodiment of patriarchy and capitalism; capitalism in the sense that he equates Akunna and Ogugua as means of economic production. Okonkwo stuck on with his decision of not allowing Akunna to be the wife of Chike, till the final part of the novel he did not change his view, he did not accept the bride price from Ofulue's family because they

belonged to the descendant of slaves. He also gave money to a medicine man to make a doll of Akunna and inserted a needle in the heart of the doll which according to their traditional belief will weaken Akunna and she will have to surrender her life. This symbolises lack of education and superstitious beliefs and traditional practices that devastate a society. Due to the lack of education the Ibuzan society continued all such evil practices which blindfold the people's eyes and make the society unhealthy and handicap, such evil practices do not allow the people to bring any changes, they take it for granted. The society thus remains stagnant.

Some other male characters who opposed women's education are- Iloba and Osenekwu, sons of Okonkwo and Okoboshi's relatives. Iloba and Osenekwu were totally against of education, the lines from the novel clarify this: "School", they said, "is no use to a free man. School is a place to send your slaves" (28). This was a wrong notion about education which highlights another old native tradition of Nigeria where slaves were sent to white men's school in order to please them, whereas their own free-born sons stayed at home and followed their traditions. Iloba and Osenekwu objected with Nna-nndo and Akunna's going to school. According to Iloba educating Akunna is just wastage of money. Again, three men from Okoboshi's family made a comment that the modern education does not do women any good rather it makes them too proud. This analysis of the characters gives us an account of that section of people who witness old traditions which harm the smooth functioning of the society. This group of people stand as barrier to equal opportunity of rights and they establish their own rights, exercise their power and derive the pleasure from those whom they consider as weak and subordinate.

On the other hand, we have other male characters through whom Emecheta tries to show that the weaker section of people can also emerge as stronger by means of education. Chike and his family members who belong to the slave category turn out to be successful and wealthy because all of them gave importance to education. Chike was a school teacher, he was a graduate in Sociology and his father was eager to send him to University for higher education, his brothers were educated too who were holding important jobs in schools and hospitals. Chike's father provided education to all of his children, irrespective of sex. Though they were descendants of slaves yet they were rich and powerful that they seemed to command the respect of everyone. This shows how education can empower the weaker section of people. It helps to eradicate the inequalities maintained in the society, it enables a society to progress from various fields, because of education Akunna and Chike could come together, their thoughts were different from those who followed the old traditions like Okonkwo, Ngbeke and others who were not ready to accept modern education. Chike also supported Nna-nndo, Akunna's brother to get education and Chike's family sent money to Ma-Blackie every month which later made her completely independent. Emecheta wants to show how education can enable a person to be independent and how it helps to support each other in the time of trouble. Similarly, Ben Adegor, Chike's old school friend and his wife, Rose Adegor stood by the side of Chike and Akunna when they were hopeless and helpless, this implies the theme of sisterhood and brotherhood and commitment towards black unity. All these give us a clear picture of the significance of education.

Conclusion:

Through this extensive and critical study we have found different and contradictory attitudes of the characters towards education, mainly towards the women's education. We can see two different sections of people- one section comprises of those people who views education as a blessing for the society and for the women as well, on the other hand, the another section comprises of people who discard education and indulge in old native traditional practices.

The study has helped us to understand how the contradictory opinions and attitudes towards education have affected the lives of the people. The people who supported education could become successful in their lives, they became independent both mentally and economically except Akunna who was economically independent but she could not free herself completely from the traditional belief that a girl dies during the childbirth if her bride price is unpaid, Akunna was mentally caught by the traditional belief, she could not liberate herself completely. Through the novel Emecheta has given us the solutions of various problems that education provides yet, she does not liberate her protagonist completely, by doing this she indicates that tradition still is an enemy and it is not easy to overcome it in a single attempt and single-handedly; there must be many Akunnas who have to struggle and who have to raise their voices and get strong hold of education. Emecheta tries to urge the women community to support educating their daughters just like Akunna's mother, Ma Blackie and also she wants to show that there can be fathers too like Akunna's father and Chike's father who provided education to both the sons and daughters. The people who opposed education could not hold any important jobs, they were uneducated and followed the old traditions, they were unwilling to move on with the new law of equality as under the white men's law the slaves were declared as free. They also maintained gender differences and as a result objected women's education.

Through the study we have also come to know that education helps to eradicate gender discrimination, racial differences and traditional barriers towards gender equality. The characters in the novel who valued education and who were educated regarded women as equal to them, they respected women, for example; Chike loved and cared Akunna very much and listened to her, again, Ben Adegor loved and respected his wife. Due to their education Akunna and Chike could bridge the social gap, because of education their mindsets became different from the rest of the people in Ibuza, whereas, Okonkwo and his family members resembled patriarchy and they helped in carrying on the traditional norms that stand as barriers to gender equality. Emecheta is not against the cultural practices and traditional system of Nigeria or Ibuza but she tries to show that certain evil practices and traditional beliefs affect people's lives and are meaningless. Okonkwo could not come out of his traditional belief and practice; he could not accept Chike's family as equal to his family although they were educated, well established and wealthy, his stubborn mentality let him to carry on this traditional practice of social difference and this finally led him to pay the medicine man for conducting the traditional malpractice which the villagers of Ibuza believed to take away Akunna's life and this sad story of Akunna and Chike was told to every girl in Ibuza as a lesson to warn them. But Emecheta concludes that all such belief is nonsense: "Of

course, that is all nonsense. Of course a safe birth does not depend on a bride price. But even today, no girl wants to risk it” (85).

Thus, Buchi Emecheta is successful in dealing with the theme of women’s education and her work suggests that education is very much necessary for the upliftment of women. It emancipates a woman and enables her to be independent mentally, socially and economically but it is not an easy task because tradition still performs to be a constraint. To fight these traditional barriers every individual should value education and support education for all.

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