

**Mapping Sisterhood within the Rubric of Western Migration Policy:****A Study of Buchi Emecheta's *Head above Water*****Dr. Shiv Govind Puri**

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Buchi Emecheta's *Head above Water* (1994) exposes the injustice of traditional male oriented social customs relegating the life of women to servitude and victimization. Buchi Emecheta is distinguished for her vivid portrayal of female subordination and conflicting cultural values in modern Africa. Her writings revolve around the theme of race and gender identities in postcolonial Africa. Her novel represents the Igbo culture and subjugation of women, clash between tradition and western imperialism. She represents women as equal to men eradicating all the gender prejudices. Being a postcolonial writer, she writes for the imposition of western white values on the indigenous African culture. Emecheta's book repeatedly raises a voice of protest against the privileged patriarchal system that subjugate the women such as widow inheritance, exclusion from financial security and reduce their status to any object devoid any personal entity. She challenges the double colonization of women by the hegemonic order i.e.; gender and sisterhood. She exposes the role of traditional womn that demand women's self-sacrifice.

Emecheta has also successfully combined her early and late life experiences both in colonial Nigeria and postcolonial London. As a Nigerian Ibo, Emecheta translated her local experiences into a global context through her knowledge of another language and culture. Yet the difficulties she experienced in becoming a liberated woman and an acclaimed writer at the same time originated from the imperialistic and patriarchal discourses which classified her as racially inferior and ideologically marginalized. Gayatri C. Spivak has accepted the issue of

‘sisterhood’ as a big challenge for the western academia where they boast of giving the equal status to the women of the third world along with first world women which is not true. This ethical risk of silence is self-defeating for the third world women within the framework texted in western situation. The present paper attempts to study the societal as well as cultural conditioning of ‘sisterhood’ in western academia pertaining to the migration policy. The policy had an agenda of putting the sufferings of women altogether so that an amicable solution can be made and ensured across the cultures. But, the above agenda could not take the agenda much longer since the issue was conditioned with certain races, therefore, the focus could not attract the attention of the people towards the black people. Behind this issue I have also researched on it and assessed that the main issue of those people who come from the same race but they do not enjoy the freedom they received yet they discriminate women on the behalf of color. They prefer to be married with a white in the place of black. Such type of discriminations should be abolished.

Buchi Emecheta testifies her work on the issue of sisterhood as well as motherhood and finds that the earlier and the later one is still problematic in the case of women’s liberation and empowerment for their self-identity. These issues are the construct of the patriarchy and they monitor all the cases of disowning by the political agency. They regard them as a policy of the change worldwide. The whole text of the control and construct is in the interpretation of ideology they create for the ongoing changes. Language is also an issue that permeates the ambience of the issue. There is another issue of the text we create on which we want to understand the discrimination between social perspectives as well as cultural perspectives that is still projecting the thing for next level of justification. Since the key aspect of my research is of knowing the various phases of emotional bondage as well as social they need to be argued and justified. Sisterhood and Motherhood is a phenomenal issue in the feminist

scholarship. While we are working on this project it becomes more pertinent for us to look into the various intricacies of the key point promulgated in the contemporary ongoing researches. Till now, most of the researches have been made on the basis of given facts by the previous researchers and sometimes they have analyzed the issue at one or other level that is not the complete research. Hence, there is a dire need to go beyond the given facts and provide the various alternatives through which one can understand the problem area and subsequently remedies so far. African American women have researched the issue on the basis of the real life experiences and they found that the case of black women to white women is completely different that do not allow mixing up with one to other for the further research. Therefore, we need to understand all those issues which are responsible for the identity in question. Tony Morrison has opined her views and said that the women of white origin are not sub-texted in the ongoing researches of the American literature while the case of black women is subjugated and subdued under the agency of selfhood and identity. There is another case of a black woman who marries outside the race, with a white person does not receive all the privileges of a white woman does, so, this is a double policy of the racial discrimination that do not emancipate a woman from her existing identity and space. Audre Lorde has also given her views on this issue and suggests that a woman needs her own space especially in the case of black women but they are not allowed to enter. Black women are exploited at three levels; patriarchal, racial and class, all these situations negate her real self, consequently, the whole perspective of sisterhood and motherhood as a help group do not work at the great deal. Patriarchy exploits women's freedom at the different stages for which I would like to quote Judith Butler's views and she says that the women's position is the outcome of her performance how she plays her role repeatedly in the society becomes part of her identity. There is no need to understand her positioning under the rubric of

biological creation. Subsequently, women's position is also decided by her performances and roles according to the different places. Suppose that a woman presents herself as an urban or from the metropolitan reflection, but the moment she changes her place and talks the same thing from the rural space, the whole consequences thereof would be differed. Hence, we have various views of the feminist researchers and they find that the whole issue of subdued character is of the performances and roles nothing else. Further, I would like to take the words of Shulamith Firestone, a person of Sociology and comes from Canadian Literature submits her views in the seminal book, *The Dialectic of Sex*, and she says that the discrimination is the result of role system that a woman plays in her life at different locations, that role may be of her mother, wife, sister, mother-in-law and so forth. These roles recognize them and establish their identity and social space, and further the ideology of the society towards her affiliations. Now, she begins to accommodate according to the need and requirement of the social situation. She silences herself. One can say she has been silenced gradually. Let us have a look at the recommendations of Firestone, and understand about their relevance. She suggests and blames also that the whole victimization on the different levels has been assessed because of the division of domain; one domain is exclusively made for male and other one for male, and the division of work is also divided on the same ratio. For example a woman has to play the role of mothering because she is a woman she has to be mother, bear and rear the child as no one can do it unless she is a woman. So, we make the thing universalized in order to normalize the social conditioning. Hence, Shulamith submits her suggestion and says that this bearing and rearing accountability should be transferred from public domain to private. We need to dismantle all the binary situations that create divisions. Firestone also advocates for Government support should come forward for inclusive approach towards developing more and more spaces for child care home and vitro-

fertilization facility so that people can be aware and make it convenient for the society. Firestone negates negative and relative identity of women. With reference to these writers I want to examine the words of late J S Mill who finds that the policy of sisterhood and motherhood is not always successful for some reasons. The Subjection of Women is his seminal book in which he says that the image of woman is decided and controlled in the form of relative personality, and this relative personality is the consequence of her economic independence, that women are not given. On this cause Marxist ideology also supports and advocate for the social as well as economic freedom is needed for the holistic development. Virginia Woolf has also understood the identity and existence of the woman which is very much decided by economic situation of that woman. She has given her views in Three Guineas and says that a woman can reach and avail the freedom of life only through self-dependant character. Therefore, she suggests three things to be provided for every woman so that they can liberate themselves from all the taboos and restriction of the society that hamper their freedom and development. The first thing that she suggests is the school should be provided, and, that should be managed and controlled by women only. They can take better care of every woman. The second thing is for hospital facility also be managed and controlled by women only. Third thing is about the employment creation is equally needed for the growth of the society. Woolf suggests all the above for the sake of responsibility and accountability. Woolf's view is to be seen and analyzed in the light of respect and honour . I should note here that a number of African writers like Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, and Flora Nwapa have rejected the term "feminist" because of its negative connotations, its identification with western individualized philosophy, and its exclusion from the mainstream society. Therefore, they suggest that we should not be operated or controlled by any other power groups that tarnish our image and identity. It is a political word and very

much being controlled by agency. Since the motive of the same strategy is to subdue the other's identity has been the main reason. Similarly, Flora Nwapa writes about women and their lives, issues, and concerns within the traditional culture of Oguta society. As she explores and analyzes many of the characteristics of her tribal group, she posits the women's desire for change, choice, and acceptance within a society in which they wish to participate fully as human beings not just as women traditionally expected to participate in a limited, culturally-defined way. The women in Nwapa's novels speak to the needs of collective and individual female identity within their culture. Christianity and colonial education also influenced the economy. The British employed tactics that changed the types of crops that were desirable, manipulated the cash flow, and changed the roles that women played in the economy. The British destroyed the informal businesses by exporting raw materials—cash crops and minerals—and importing European finished goods (119). Roads, railways, and harbors were improved and built to move products from interior regions to the coast and larger.

They seek love and respect from the community and acceptance of the choices they make. As Nwapa's works evolve, her female characters become more independent, aggressive, and self-styled: increasingly, they are women with a mission.

In African-American women have different versions of feminist scholarship, and they consider themselves as any other woman of this globe and nothing else. They find it difficult to put them under any canons of literature which is problematic as well as not conducive for further explication. This attitude reflects a difference that some scholars see between African-American and African feminism. Collins views "Black feminism as a process of self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to actualize a humanist vision of the community" (39). Some African female writers like Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa refuse

to call themselves feminists because the term is thought to be divisive and too European in its application. Many women of color believe European feminism divides men and women and often creates women's hatred and antagonism towards men. In addition, since many middle class and upper class European women did not work or were not allowed to work, their sense of freedom was often different from that of their African, African-American, and poor sisters. European women's sense of freedom came from economic and political breakthroughs. Most women of the African diaspora have always worked in some types of jobs even though the level of economic security varied. However, the one similarity is the need for all women to be respected and valued for their ideas and contributions in the workforce and at home. Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta have said they are not feminists. They argue that their works speak to the needs of the African community, with an emphasis on women having power to make choices that are not always traditional but still being changed and correlate with ongoing changes in the surrounding parlance.

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**About the author:** Dr. Shiv Govind Puri is currently working as an Associate Professor, University of Lucknow, U.P. India. Dr. Puri has many research articles to his credit. *Australian Literature: Paradigms, Praxis and Theory*. Atlantic: New Delhi (2016) and *Contemporary Indian Women Writers: Concepts and Contexts* (co-edited with Nazneen) Author Press: New Delhi (2014) are his recent publications.

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