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## **Theme of double yoke in the select Novels of Buchi Emecheta**

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### **Abstract**

This research paper examines the theme of double yoke in two selected novels of African feminist writer Buchi Emecheta. Double Yoke and Kehinde novels contain the theme 'double yoke' means there are hybrid cultural effects on woman characters and here the theme fits in like sugar mixed with milk, as both characters such as Nko (Protagonist of the novel Double Yoke) and Kehinde (Protagonist of the novel Kehinde) are torn between old tradition and new modernity in such a way that they keep both in balance and establish a distinct self-identity of their own in the orthodox traditional society. Emecheta depicts educated women who have self-awakening and desires to achieve their emancipation from conventional Igbo society of Nigeria. Women have to endured discrimination and fight against the orthodox society. Through this research paper, I want to highlight that Emecheta portrays stubborn women and they want to achieve their self-identity. For that women rebel against all odds and never give up their fight against inequality in the traditional society. In both these novels, the author shows women who do not lose courage against all bad situations and achieve emancipation by fulfilling their self-desires.

**Keywords:** Double yoke, female education, patriarchy, virginity, self-desire, self-awakening, disloyalty, polygamy in marriage, emancipation

### **Introduction**

Buchi Emecheta was a Nigerian female writer who has best described her true experiences during her lifetime and her perception of women in her society in her novels. Women are prevented from education and their virginity is doubted and they are treated as sissies by the male dominated society. Emecheta in her novel 'Double Yoke' and 'Kehinde' accurately describes women are barred from their higher education and living as they please, and they are considered inferior in society and try to suppress. Woman writers broke with their old writings and in a new way they start to write the experiences of women into their feminine writings. The pains women endured to fulfill their desires and establish their identity in a male dominated society, and they maintain the old tradition and the new modernity are depicted by Buchi Emecheta. Her woman characters are strugglers to establish self-identity in patriarchal society. Old tradition and modernity are portrayed as a double yoke theme in selected novels such as Double Yoke and Kehinde.

### **Double Yoke**

Buchi Emecheta's novel shows women are torn between double yoke of the old tradition and new modernity, and aims to show that women have the courage to make their own way even in bad obstacles. Nko is the protagonist of the novel and lover of Ete Kamba, they both are university students. Her lover is so suspicious that he notices that she did not bleed when he first had sex with her and begins to suspect that she is not a virgin. Even though women are sanctified in a male dominated society, they are suspected by men for some reason and always try to assert rights over and above them. The traditional male ministerial society of Nigeria does not give women the opportunity to study so that women can overtake them and try to stop women and to dominate over women. Ete Kamba believes that if his girlfriend is more educated than him, she will start talking about equal rights and thus hurt his man's ego. In this novel, the author has given her main protagonist a challenge to the society and has shown the strength to fulfill her dreams and to achieve university degree with highest grade in such a traditional society and she herself has tried to identify herself by struggling between the ideas of double yoke of the old tradition and the modernity. Nko is about to adopt new modern ideologies and her lover believes in the old tradition that his own lover who will become his wife in future should be like his mother who upholds the old tradition and believes her position as inferior to men.

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Man has fear that woman gets highest degree and position than him. Ete advises Nko in every matter and says that you have to cover your face in front of the professor Ikot, and he discourages his girlfriend to not outshine in studies. A man is always afraid of a woman getting ahead of him and that's why he wants to show his masculinity and prove to the woman that he is one step ahead of woman and that's how Ete asks his girlfriend about virginity. Ete is a believer in the strict norms and customs of his Igbo society while Nko with her independent thinking has come to study in the university to give her a different identity in her society and get a university degree with highest marks and work hard to fulfill her parents' and her own dreams.

After the first time they have sex, Ete is convinced that Nko is not a virgin and has many affairs with others, so he confronts her and call her a prostitute without any proper proof. A negative gland is built in the minds of traditional men that a woman should bleed from her body when she has sex for the first time but in many cases, this is not the case and it does not mean that the woman is not chaste because there are many biological reasons behind it the body it may be related. Here we can notice Ete's lack of trust and love towards his girlfriend because if he truly loved her, he wouldn't have time to doubt her. The writer has tried to break down the oppressed position of women in her society and to make women strong and he has created woman characters who can keep up with men on equal footing. Nko is caught between two ideologies one is to become her lover's ideal wife and on the other hand to acquire a university degree and make distinct impression on her Igbo society. Here Emecheta represents Nko as a modern new woman who resists patriarchal society for her higher education and the author depicts male character's traditional norms and woman character's modern norms. We can notice clashes between double yoke of old tradition and new modernity.

As the professor Ikot holds a high position in the Calabar University, he takes advantage of Nko and tells her that if she wants a degree, she has to sleep with him or else she will have to suffer. As Nko too was a new-minded woman, she also demanded that I should do the degree with highest grades. In such a traditional society, women are forced to live with discrimination and they are convinced that they should focus more on marriage and motherhood than education, thus the society succeeds in suppressing women over men. But here Emecheta describes a strong woman who has endured many odds and has managed to identify herself and fulfills her dreams. The author depicts educated woman who become aware of discrimination and challenges the Igbo society. After sexually abused by professor Ikot, Nko becomes pregnant and she decides to survive without man. Double Yoke novel is based on a strong independent woman and she is very ambitious woman from rural background. Her lover wants to keep her as a submissive woman but she has opposite thoughts than Ete Kamba. The novel begins with love and ends with a disastrous pregnancy by professor Ikot where a woman with an independent mind is empowered to live her life on her own terms and make her own way.

Buchi Emecheta explores struggles of woman character in double yoke of old tradition and new modernity. There is a harsh reality of the Nigerian society where a woman has to sleep with a man of high position to prove her identity, this is her compulsion to achieve degree but she was so strong

and stubborn that even after pregnancy she decided to survive alone and establish her self-identity in patriarchal Igbo society. The author wants to improve the society through her feminist writing and wants to make women aware that if injustice is done to them then fight against it and if you have the right to fulfill your dreams then have the strength to fulfill them and run after fulfilling them. Educated woman is portrayed by Buchi Emecheta and she wants to show that education gives women new thinking and convinces them that injustice is done to them and they have full right to make their self-identity in the male dominated society.

### **Kehinde**

Kehinde is one of the best novels of Buchi Emecheta and Kehinde is the main protagonist of the novel. Here the author wants to show that her main woman character also believes in the old tradition as well as new modernity. Women are considered to have a low position in a male dominated society and it is believed by men that women can not surpass men but here comes the characters of Kehinde as a strong woman who works in a bank and is different from her society. Kehinde's husband Albert earns less than his wife and he believe that this is country of woman where woman queen reigns. Kehinde lives with her husband and their children in England, and she lives her life independently while Albert believes that men are oppressed here women rule here and decides to go back to his native land Nigeria where women do as men say. Albert can not bear to his more earned wife and so that he decides to go back. Kehinde also agree for it and she will come back after selling their house in London. In England, Kehinde can take her own decision without her husband's permission and enjoy autonomy. Emecheta depicts independent woman who obeys her culture and takes care of her family but her husband is very traditional man and he suffocates in England where he can not enjoy masculinity. Women are equally treated in England. Albert forces to Kehinde for aborting their third child because pregnancy postponed his plan for going home. Here writer depicts selfish man who escapes from his wife's promotion. He is store keeper in London and his wife is on the high position in job.

Buchi Emecheta depicts Kehinde as a free independent career woman who is not dependent on her husband or any other. She took care of her husband Albert, took care of her two children and managed her life easily along with her job and also believed in old traditions and in modern ideas. But her husband is of the very opposite nature, who believes so much in the old tradition that if his sisters' letter arrives the house, he is ready and begins to believe that I will be valued only in my native country, but this is England, here belongs to the queens Raj runs and here women get freedom whereas in his country women consider men first and male ministers are believed in the society such on ideology she holds. After Albert moved back to his home country, he did not try to contact his wife for two years and when Kehinde returned to the Nigeria, she found that her husband had married another woman and they had a child with another child on the way (Second time pregnancy). Thus, he betrayed his first wife and married her second without asking her.

In a male dominated society, women have to bear such pains and betrayals, and it is a custom that a man can marry more than one woman and it is called 'Polygamy in marriage' and

women become enemies of each other. After coming back to the homeland that Kehinde can not call her husband by his given name and she is scolded by another woman in the family that you can't call your husband by his name here this is not your England so women are considered inferior to men. When Kehinde asks her husband about his second marriage with woman named Rike, Albert replies that my father had two wives and your father had three wives so how can you stop me, thus silencing his wife by teaching their old traditions. She left her bank job and returned to her hometown and was betrayed by her husband who decided to go back to England and live her life by her own rules.

After moving back to England, she boarded up his house for sale and took it down and decided that the house is now mine and I was going to live here on my own terms and so she has an affair with her tenant and lived her life by his own rules and started living according to and earned a degree in sociology and provided best example of independent woman in male dominated Igbo society. The author has shown in her novel writing educated women who are aware of their independence and their abilities and have the ability to fight and struggle against the society to create their own identity when they are wronged.

After sometime Kehinde's son Joshua came to England and began to claim the house that this is my house and was taught by his father that we should keep women under men control and the house in England is yours which he also believes like his father. Women always have a low position and will sink the way we push it and in response her mother says that house is mine and will be followed here according to my rules thus she emerges as a strong woman. He also tells his mother that I don't like you have an affair with tenant and I will kick him out of my house then his mother says this is my own house and I can live my life independently and when your father remarried so nothing was said and now you are interfering in my personal life. When upheavals and sorrow come in woman's life, she becomes so strong that she becomes an independent woman in the patriarchal society and stands on her own feet and becomes successful as she lives her life.

In this research paper, the author wants to say about two such woman characters who despite being torn between the old tradition and the new modern tradition in the male dominated Igbo society, have created their own identity and fulfilled their unfulfilled dreams and have the strength to live independent life and face many obstacles in their life. Nko's lover believes in the old traditions but to fulfill her dreams, she goes against her lover Ete Kamba and wants to get university degree, and Kehinde comes back to England to live independent life without husband because he betrayed her. In both novels, the female characters get betrayed by their lover and husband, and despite being stuck in the old tradition, they endure a lot and get freedom from their modern ideologies, that's why the author says that women get freedom but they have to sacrifice a lot for it. This research paper analysis hybrid cultural effects on both Nko and Kehinde, and how to handle double yoke of old tradition and modernity in their lives. Buchi Emecheta depicts that modern African women are no more weak victim, but they are stubborn towards establishing their self-identity in the patriarchal society.

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