



Research Paper

## Pathetic condition of a character: Aku-nna in Buchi Emecheta's 'The Bride Price'

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### ABSTRACT:

*Buchi Emecheta is a female writer who belongs to post colonial African literature and knows for her excellent depiction of African women judiciously. Buchi Emecheta is a writer who focuses on African culture and values, female subordination, gender politics, sexual discrimination, otherness, racism, unhappy marital arrangements, slavery, motherhood, superstition, myth such type of subjects she manipulates skilfully. It is Emecheta who portrays the life and experiences of the African women. (5) In this paper the focus is on the pathetic condition of the Aku-nna who is the protagonist of the novel 'The Bride Price'. She depicts the male dominant society in which there is no scope for the girl children. The role of a women in the society is shaped by dominant males. In the African society women have subordinate status. Emecheta highlights the place of women in the African society and she uses characters as well as theme as her tools.(4)*

*In African literature women are deprived by the writers but Emecheta who offers ray of hope for the African women and she depicts their plight too. Contemporary society as well as the pathetic condition of the Africans and especially of women is presented through her novels by Buchi Emechet. It is the opinion of the Emecheta about the African women that there is no freedom for the women because they possess to others either to a father or a brother. (8) In the 'Bride Price' novel she portraits the pathetic condition of the character Aku-nna very carefully and this paper focuses on it.*

**KEYWORDS:** pathetic, discrimination, subordinate, contemporary, protagonist, dominant

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### I. INTRODUCTION :

In African culture woman has no value of her own. It is father or husband can control their way of life. Because of such cultural customs woman in the then society has no dignity. Women have subordinate position in the society. It is annoying for the women of the African society. (8)

Emecheta is renowned as well as remarkable African writer who raised voice for women of the African society. Her works are concerning to the plight and position of women in the society. She basically knows for novels such as 'Second Class Citizen (1974), The Bride Price (1976), The Slave Girl (1977) and The Joys of Motherhood (1979).' All novels of Emecheta depict the culture as well as customs of Africa and the place of the women in the society. Being a woman she experiences the suffering, distress and subordinate status in the society. So whatever she saw and experienced around her in the society, she depicted it into her novels. 'The Bride Price' is a novel that focuses on issues such as: oppression, culture, gender politics and so on but apart from these subjects there is a protagonist Aku-nna who is harrassed by the other characters of the novel.(3). It is a pathetic condition because after the death of her father there is no one to understand her feelings and eventually the character died because of blind belief of the African society. At the end of the novel she died because such stupid belief. It is extremely miserable thing which happens with the central character of the novel.(5)

'The Bride Price' is certainly a celebrated novel in English literature which is penned by famous African novelist Buchi Emecheta. There are few characters in the novel but among them Aku-nna is a central character. Her age is thirteen. She is described in the novel beautifully such as she looked like her father and she was like him in other ways too. She was small, and not at all dark. Her skin was a light milk-chocolate colour. Her eyes were large and shining. When she was happy and excited, they shone like stars. When she was sad, their light disappeared. (9) page No : 3) She is thin, looks starved. Because of such type of health, if someone affected by chicken-pox or malaria it catches to Aku-nna surely. Her parents tired of her illness because she often ill. She is only daughter of Ezekiel Odia and Ma Blackie. There is no one around her to understand her or her feeling.

Aku-nna is a central character who confronts problems which come during her life time. (6) Being a girl child there is no value or importance in her own family . She is like unwanted for her family. There is no importance given to her because she is girl and thin too. Unhappy life , sad experience and life of Aku-nna is portrayed by Emecheta.(2)

Ezekiel Ochia is father of Aku-nna . She is close to her father than her mother . Her father after her birth kept her name - Aku-nna which means ' father's wealth ' . In the family father has importance , it is a father who is head of the family and taking care of family members is the responsibility of him. Honour is given to them who has many sons. Ezekiel detests his wife because of only one son. There is love and closeness between Aku-nna and him but for the social status he does not consider her. For him she is insignificant . Aku-nna loves him too much . There is a emotional attachment between them. " Aku-nna knew that there was a kind of bond between her and her father which did not exist between her and her mother" (P.12). Her father died because of the leg injury who works in the factor . Aku-nna is closer to her father than mother . " Aku-nna knew that there was a kind of bond between her and her father which did not exist between her and her mother." (12) (6) Aku-nna prepares hot soup and yams for her father.(4 & 6) She could not see the trouble of wounded feet of her father . (4) Her father often says to both her and her brother , ' Always remember that you are mine'. (5) There is a emotional bonding between father and daughter . Once Aku-nna said , " ' I will not leave my father' s house without all the proper ceremonies '.(3)

While Aku-nna expressed her grief of her fathers death , we realise the bonding or closeness between daughter and father . She expressed her feelings by saying , " ' *My father was a good provider. My father went to church every Sunday. He was a good husband to my mother, Ma Blackie. He bought me many dresses. He was kind to me. He sent me to school.*' This was followed by a long, wordless cry of sadness. Then she sang, ' *Who will be kind to me now? Who will send me to school? Who will feed me? Who will be a good husband to my mother? . . . Mother, come back from Ibuza! You have lost your husband. He married you according to local custom, and then again in the Christian church. And now he has gone. Come back, Mother! You have lost the father of your children . . .*' (13) Aku-nna is a girl child who loves her father too much . After his death she felt devastated . Her father works in the factory and mother leaves children so that children leads life as an orphan . This is like a mental trauma for them . Loosing father means loosing childhood as well as life for the children . It is a father who is shelter for them and he is everything for them.(1)

Mother Ma Blackie does not take care of her daughter like father. It is belief that father is shelter and mother is only women are supposed to be boneless .(7) Ma Blackie is mother of Aku-nna who treats her brutally and rudely . After getting married to her uncle , she forget about her daughter and son. At that time Aku-nna comes to know that she has neither father nor mother. (6) Because of her frequent illness , mother shouted at her calling ' a living - dead ' . Her mother berated her when Okoboshi tried to sexually abused . At that time Aku-nna said , " Oh ... Mother, Aku-nna begged, please don' t say anything. Okoboshi was hurting me, he was.....,He was wicked- Oh Mother, please listen." (124) .(6) Instead of scolding to Okoboshi , Aku-nna's mother berates her. After the death of her father Aku-nna felt dejected because her mother had not spent time for her children and she left them alone . One thing Aku-nna knows certainly that her mother no longer had any time for her: she was too busy with her business and her new husband. Aku-nna was a very unimportant member of a large and busy family. She was a quiet and lonely girl.(35) Emecheta's aim is to focus on the relationship between daughter and mother . Because Ma Blackie does not pay attention towards her daughter and she deserted her. (1)

Okonkwo is the character who is crafty as well as greedy man . He thinks to arrange the marriage of both sisters Aku-nna and Ogugua at the same time and gets bride price from the groom . Aku-nna is a commodity for Okonkwo . After the elopment of Aku-nna , Okonkwo decides to take revenge and eventually he gives divorce to Ma Blackie . He uses black magic and makes a doll which has Aku-nna like face and he stabs needles into heart of the doll. Okonkwo is a character who gives lots of trouble to Aku-nna. (3) Aku-nna is a innocent girl who knows nothing about black magic . Okonkwo is a bad character . Aku-nna' s brother Nna-ndo once expressed , " I hate this man Okonkwo . " (1) Educated girl can fetch high bride price than uneducated girls. This thing Okonko knows very well so he decides to send her to the school. (4) Aku-nna loves Chike and marries against the wish of Okonkwo .He does not want Aku-nna gets marry to Chike.(2) He is responsible for the death of Aku-nna because he denies the bride price from Chike . Chike is from slave family and this is the reason of rejection of bride price. It is a belief that if groom marries to a girl and unable to pay bride price , the bride dies in child birth. Finally rejection of the bride price affects Aku-nna psychologically . Because of psychological effect she dies eventually . (3) Being a surrogate father he is unable to upbringing Aku-nna and her brother . Instead of giving love and protection to them he gives trouble to them. Only one reason behind the death of Aku-nna is none other than he.

Okoboshi is a character who after kidnaping Aku-nna tries to seduce Aku-nna but eventually she rescues herself by saying lie that she is not virgin . Okoboshi's and his family's intention is to make her infamous in Ibuza. (7) and once he tries to squeeze her breast after intering into her hut. (52) Forcefully he kidnaps her

and Aku-nna feels dejected and says, 'This is the end of my all dreams'.(56) It is Okoboshi who lets her go when she declares that she is not virgin.(71) She endures injustice of Okoboshi.

## II. CONCLUSION :

Aku-nna is an innocent character of the novel 'The Bride Price'. All the bad things happen in her life and certainly she is affected by them. Because of psychological and emotional effect as well as malnutrition and anemia she died in her first childbirth. (1) One main reason of her tragic condition is loss of her father because there is understanding as well as bonding between them. Emecheta has portrayed the sad and alienating life of Aku-nna. Novels of Buchi Emecheta depict the condition of women of the African society. Aku-nna endures humiliation, oppression of the other characters of the novel after her father's death. Impact of the oppression, domination, gender discrimination, black magic leads her to tragic death. (5) It is a pitiable condition of Aku-nna because her father is only person who could understand her feelings. So after his death she felt broken. Aku-nna lost her father then her own life as well as her first child. It is a heart-breaking thing for the reader. In the society story of Aku-nna told 'you must accept the husband that your people choose you, and your bride price must be paid. If it is not paid, you will never survive the birth of your first child. (The Bride Price, 85)'. Aku-nna is a character who endures numerous atrocities. At the end she becomes a victim of the Okonkwo's black art and died. Psychologically traumatized Aku-nna asks Chike, whether her own father would have behaved the same. "I wonder why people hate one another so?." (1) Pathetic condition of Aku-nna is depicted by the Buchi Emecheta. She depicted successfully the pitiful picture of Aku-nna. The novel gives a message to the women of the contemporary society that if you want to survive in the society and save your first child, it is must to pay bride price. (85)

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