

*Self-Assertion of Women in
The Rape of Shavi*

Chapter VI

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The Rape of Shavi expresses Emecheta's anger on the African people for willingly subjugating themselves to unwarranted oppressions. The London Review of Books comments on the *The Rape of Shavias*, "A very good story artfully told: the rational, provoking arguments about multi-racial societies and military law, are dropped into the narrative with a natural unobtrusive cunning, rare in modern fiction" (qtd.in Newman 161). The title of the novel suggests that it is an allegory suggesting the rape of the indigenous culture by the colonial powers. The novel is set in an imaginative kingdom of Shavi in Africa. Buchi Emecheta creates a legendary empire called Shavi, which is a haven shielded by hills, providing immense protection and remains surprisingly unaffected and uninterrupted by the world outside.

The ancestors of Shavi came from a place called Ogbe Asaba. They were enslaved by King Kokuma and were treated as slaves by the King. They were not provided any salary to take care of their family and also their offsprings were taken by the brutal King to be sacrificed. They tried to free themselves from the tyrannical rule of King Kokuma for generations but steps taken always turned futile. A sudden resurgence among the slaves happens under the leadership and guidance of Shavi who is born to one of the King's sweetheart among the slaves. Shavi is the son of King Kokuma but Kokuma had not married his mother, for she is a slave girl from Ogbe Asaba, the slave village. The young Shavi has grown up as a slave, to his surprise, he is provided with some unique privileges from the tyrant King while others are not provided with any such. Shavi made up his mind to get back his Kingdom. "Presently, the spirit of freedom in Shavi, which came to him through the blood of the Kings that ran in his veins, rose up."(TRS 27)

Though Shavi is half-brother to the ruling King, he is treated badly by the King's men as he is not of noble origin. Having grown up as a valiant young man, he encouraged his people to fight against the King and motivated the people of Ogbe Asaba to revolt for their freedom. When the guiltless group approached the King, freedom was denied and the payment that they gave to the King to release them was returned. Since the Shavians were treated as slaves for ages, they never had a thought or believed that they could be freed from his rule. They thought, "Freedom is a difficult thing to possess" (TRS 28) as they have been acclimatized to such oppression without any resistance.

The king's men cunningly called for Koku's sons of Ogbe Asaba and sacrificed his first son. The group is not in position to revolt against this injustice and nextly the Kingsmen called for the young Shavi and his two sons. The people understood the consequence that awaited Shavi following this invitation. So a group of slaves under the leadership of the young leader Shavi escaped to create an identity of their own. They have come to a decision that their only aim is independence. A group of thirty one young men and children left Ogbe Asaba in search of a new place. These victims, along with their children, walked for more than three months to identify this serene land of Shavi. They underwent all types of miseries during their mission, like unknown enemies, nature's cruelty and natural instincts such as hunger and thirst has shaken their determination many times, but they remain unshaken with an indomitable hope of finding a place which would be filled with peace and affluence.

After more than hundred days of their tireless walk they reached this place which is surrounded by mountains so that no new person could intervene into their place and spoil their tranquility. Eventually they have traced their haven; they have succeeded in

spotting a place near Ogene Lake which provided good water both for men and their cattle. “They washed and made sacrifices, not with humans like Kokuma, but with birds. And because their prayers were heard and the lakes produced enough to feed them, birds became the object of worship of the people.”(TRS 32)

The people of Shavi considered the lake as Goddess Ogene. They called the new settlement as Shavi, a mark of honouring their chief, who had delivered them out of slavery. They started to live in harmony and they have no intimidating enemies and no authoritative head who insisted on human sacrifices. The Shavians started to live an undisturbed life, “Today, there were over twenty thousand of them.” (TRS 32) They worshipped nature and took oath thus:

The King and his men had sworn with their life blood that no one should oppress or use his position to treat the other sub humanly. They had learnt through their ancestors what it was to be enslaved, and Shavi prided herself on being the only place in the whole of the Sahara, where a child was free to tell the King where it was that he had gone wrong. (TRS 11)

Since the Shavians have undergone the pain of slavery, they remained God fearing people and never disturbed anyone around and lead a calm life treating all equally within their Kingdom. They allowed the sinners free and firmly believe that the humiliation kills the malefactors quicker than any punishment imposed on them and so they would repent for their action. All the people of Shavi had the right to question the King if he went wrong. They are tribal people with no connection to the modern world. Their customs are totally outmoded but they lead a composed life in that remote area surrounded by mountains which isolates their group from the modern world.

The Shavian region is ruled by King Patayon, a descendant of Shavi when the story starts. The King is guided by a group of elderly counsellors and the clever priest Anoko and his assistant Menza. The primary duty of the priest is to organize communication with the Goddess of the Lake, Ogene and to invoke her blessings and protection. When King Patayon is introduced in the novel he is on the verge of marrying a young lady as his ninth wife. The political power lies in the hands of King Patayon and it is a patriarchal society. Shoshovi, wife of King Patayon and the Queen mother, remains within her limits and she never interferes or opposes King Patayon and his decisions. She is upset by the news of the marriage of King Patayon, neither can she stop it nor has the power to express her disapproval.

Shavian society is characterised by patriarchal supremacy headed by King Patayon. Shoshovi, being the queen mother, is well aware of the procedures to be followed when displeasure against the King has to be brought about in the court. She believes and follows the custom and announces her objections as a perfect Queen mother. King Patayon becomes slightly uneasy when he finds his senior wife; the queen mother has a case against him. According to the customs of Shavi, women are equal to the Goddess Ogene they worship, so any harm done to women is regarded as a sin against their Goddess itself. The Queen Mother has come to the court stating her rights and the matter she is about to put forth is crucial, so it has to be submitted directly to the King in accordance with their tradition. But the irony is that though the Shavians claim to treat everyone equally, gender inequality is evident when the Queen mother Shoshovi addresses the King's assembly. She starts her case as,

My owners ... I invited you to the palace for a purpose. You all know what they say, that women are the softness on which our men recline. But sometimes that softness has gently to give a reminder to our men and our owners ... Ogene our

Goddess says that we are all responsible for each other, and forbids that we should let the communal spirit die and go back to the way our people were forced to live in Ogbe Asaba. (TRS 13)

The above lines clearly indicate the powerlessness of Shoshovi. She came inside the court and knelt before the King and the council of elders and indicated that she had come to record her disapproval for being side-lined by the King in not consulting her about his intention to take a new wife. She beckons her discontent in front of all the elderly men and the council of chiefs of the King's court and claims for her rights. She argued that as a Queen mother she should be the first individual to hear the news and this consultation should have happened by presenting her with a well fed cow. But she has now received the information about the King's marriage through one of the junior wives of the King. Shoshovi's intention and protest was not about getting a cow, but it is all about her reputation and position as the Queen mother.

Shoshovi has been expecting justice from the King's men, but Mensa, the court Jester belittled her real intention by stating, "Shoshovi wants a cow" (TRS 14). Shoshovi felt disgraced as she is being mocked at, as her intention behind her appeal is for her honour. She never reacted to his remarks and managed to remain calm. She has presented herself in front of the wise men so that her status quo as a senior wife should not go neglected. "She had presented her case as befitted the Queen Mother, and it was left to them to treat it as befitted the King's men. If they had set out to embarrass her, they had misfired. Her determined toughness and calmness were calculated to rattle them too" (TRS 15).

Shoshovi expected that King Patayon would say that he felt sorry for the unfairness he had done to her. Shoshovi is not just the senior of all his wives but she is the mother of

the future King, the young Prince Asogba. Shavian society is patriarchal; King Patayon's decision of marrying a ninth wife is not at all an issue while the Queen's protest is considered as irrational. While the discussion is going on in the council suddenly the people of Shavi witness a sudden explosion in the sky which make them assume with fear that, "a big fast-moving cloud suddenly loomed and tore itself from the sky, one minute a cloud, the next looking like an unusually long house, another minute the shape of a bird ... The bird of fire arched and crashed into Shavi, just outside the palace walls, close to one of the Ogene lakes" (TRS 17). The irrational people of Shavi are frightened and immediately come to a conclusion that Goddess Ogene is upset because the queen mother is insulted. They start to murmur with confusion unable to understand what is happening around them, "Has the Queen's anger become so great that she's summoned Ogene to send a mysterious bird of fire into Shavi?" (TRS 17).

The people of Shavi are astonished to find some white skinned people getting down from the huge smoky bird. They are European scientists who had planned to escape from their country under the leadership of Flip as they were traumatized by nuclear war. Flip started this mission and crafted the aircraft called the Newark. Flip clearly elaborates his real intention: "What was there for them to do? This was what had led to his decision to try to preserve the great gift of life which God had entrusted into his care. He had persuaded some of his friends from the Newark flying club to escape with him, and seek a refuge safe from the two warring giants." (TRS 36 -37)

A group of likeminded people joined hands with him realising the dreadful effects of nuclear war. The group decides to leave when their objection against nuclear war went unheeded. Suddenly the plane Newark crashes near Shavi, an isolated tribal land which

has secluded itself from the modern world. White skinned people came out of the aircraft injured and bleeding heavily and the women were weeping because the two children who accompanied them were badly hurt. They started the expedition believing that they would be safe in a distant land away from all disaster. They never dreamt that they would land in a strange place amidst a barbarous crowd.

While the White men were scared of the reaction of the tribal people, Shavians on the other hand, are stunned by the sudden occurrence. When they heard that huge sound, outside the palace, they rushed out; they witnessed an aircraft being crashed. The people of Shavi have never seen an aircraft, some said it might be a huge bird with wings and tails and has the ability to produce sound like a thunder and also capable of exhibiting smoke, some people were terrified to the core that they could not judge what it could be. The priest announced that it is a message from their Goddess. Anoku, “the priest with the skull-like head” (TRS 44), believed firmly that the white men are not humans and so they should be sacrificed to Goddess Ogene. When the people protested against “killing people who are immigrants in our society” (TRS 44), Anoku made up his mind and started to predict, “I see the Ogene river bubbling with blood instead of clear water. The Ogene is very angry. These people are not humans and will bring us destruction. They may look like humans but they have no souls. They should be used as slaves or killed or driven away” (TRS 46).

Shavian’s are not sure whether those creatures are human or some aliens from another world. Shavians thought, “Their clothes were odd, their colour frightfully strange, like the colour of lepers, and even their cries were as if somebody was holding their noses, making them emit sounds akin to the ones made by wild animals when provoked. Nonetheless, they looked more like humans than animals” (TRS 49). The Shavians could not

come to an immediate conclusion about how to treat this group of white men, a few men suggested sending them away would be the right decision. It is the young prince Asogba, who persuaded his father King Patayon that they shouldn't send these white men away. He moved his father by reminding his father about their lineage and also their promise of not hurting any creature as their ancestors had suffered as slaves. He also added that they were also once refugees and now it is their duty to provide safety to those people who have taken protection in them.

The Shavians followed the principle of non violence and so never had the habit of killing humans. When the King's men were still hesitant in taking a decision, Egnongbele, King Patayaon's close friend and a judicious adviser of the court argued that if the White people were killed they would not be able to understand the culture that those people have brought with them. Finally, the council of wise men of the court decided that the mysterious people were humans. The decision indicates that Shavians follow a democratic setup where the views of the public are accepted by the King. Young Prince Asogba's willingness in allowing an alien group into their country clearly indicates that he is a humanitarian and a man of culture.

Once the decision had been taken by the King and the elderly men of the council, the Shavian's quickly started the rescue operation; the women of Shavi came forward to take care of the women, while men would be under the care of the young Prince. The white men who survived the plane crash are - Flip, Mendoza and Ronje, along with two women-Andria and Ista and two children – Andria's daughter Kisskiss and Mendoza's son Dorf. As per the order of the King, the white children are provided with immediate medical attention. The little girl Kisskiss was treated and healed by the tender care of the women of Shavi.

The Shavian women are highly compassionate and rendered their utmost hospitality to the new members.

The people of Shavi presented their generosity by providing the finest house in their Kingdom, which stands next to their King's palace to the refugees. Though the Shavians show their hospitality to these white men, these white men had racial bias. They are always distrustful; Mendoza, a white man, was afraid that the Shavian's being tribal would be cannibals. Andria on the other hand considered them as inferior and ridiculous creatures. Ronje, a white man considered Shavi as a God abandoned place where itinerant savages lived. There is a stark dissimilarity between the sincere and friendly Shavians and the egotistical, biased and doubtful nature of the Europeans. The response of the white men and their approach proved that they consider themselves as a superior race. Thus the white men fail to understand the rich heritage of Shavian ancestry and their humanistic approach. "The Rape of Shavi draws on the colonial culture to invert colonial cultural stereotypes'. The mechanics of abrogation operates in the text's refusal of the peripheral status ascribed to Shavi. Colonial prejudice and discourse are represented via Ronje's attitude and voice and ridiculed in the same way" (Sougou 179)

The white ladies are engaged well with lots of amusement and are provided with food. Ista remarks, "We're being taught the universal lingo-laughter, happiness and food" (TRS 73). Flip understands that the Shavian egalitarian system being practiced which treats all people equally and at the same time the work is shared equally among them, such that every member of the society is expected to work for their living and as well as for their community. Flip declares "they want us to be fully accepted. We put most visitors to our country in ghettos, but these people want us to mix with them" (TRS 83-84).

The Shavian men wait till the White men recover from the shock of their plane crash, then work is assigned to them, Flip is occupied in cattle rearing while Mendoza and Ronje help in the farming. The white women were made to sweep the ground and also they are taught to cook. The Shavian people wanted their guests to involve themselves in the work so that they would not consider themselves as slaves in a new place. When the white group initially tried to show their disapproval against such treatment, it was Flip who made them understand that they have to remain calm as they should not invite any new trouble. Flip is also sure that their plane would not have been damaged much, he would be able to repair it soon and once it is ready they could fly away from the present place.

It has been fourteen days since their arrival, the Shavian people are quite pleased and King Patayon informed his court and his son Asogba to take Flip to a distant cattle field and to select six healthy cows. After the well fed cows were brought, that night the white men were invited for a social gathering. Though the white men could not trace out the reason for the merriment, they enjoyed the day with the beverages provided to them during the get-together. Eventually, a solution has been brought out to satisfy Queen Shoshovi, as per the plan, a grand ceremony has been arranged and King Patayon is ready to express his regret publicly for not informing her about his ninth marriage and also for not getting her consent. When the carnival started, soon the Queen mother arrived at the place and then King Patayon announced that he is now ready to present one of the cows as a mark of his marriage with the Ayi's daughter. King Patayon delivered his speech during this occasion,

King Patayon thanked all the people around him and gesticulating with the horse tail in his hand towards Flip and the others, said, "I'm giving my wife, Shoshovi,

a cow. I've offended her, the mother of my son, the woman who told the world that I'm a man. One should never underestimate the power of women. I only needed to offend her once, for her to invoke her sister Goddesses to send the albino people. The Goddesses have been merciful enough to turn them into friends. I understand that their chief, the one with hair like an utang, is a good cow-herd, too. And that their women enjoy cooking. (TRS 85)

After a huge cheer from the crowd Queen Shoshovi as per their custom started to dance with gracefulness as a mark of accepting the King's new marriage. But her dance clearly revealed her innate feelings,

Shoshovi knew that she was powerless to stop her husband from bringing a ninth woman to the palace and in her dancing she expressed movingly her individuality and that all women, whether the first or ninth wife, were people, just like men, and her wishes should not be swept aside. She obeyed as the Queen Mother, and Shavi, including her husband, King Patayon, should equally respect her wishes." (TRS 86)

At the end of the dance, as an action of pleasing Shoshovi, he presents a cow to the Queen, which means he could take a new wife. Queen Shoshovi's dance performance is a symbolic representation of her oppressed state. This scene explicitly portrays the subjugated status women. Though the women are not treated equally, they maintain a perfect unity among themselves, such that the elder ones are the mentors of the young women and they guide them. They form a community and maintain a sisterhood, so that they would be taking care of each other in case of their necessity.

The leader of the group of white men, Flip is wise enough to accept the Shavian's hospitality and is able to reciprocate to the kindness rendered. Flip felt that they behaved more cultured than his own people. Ronje showed his protest when he was provided with a single room while other white men were allowed to sleep with their family. Shavian's had mistaken that Flip and Ista are husband and wife and likewise Mendoza and Andria too. So they have provided them rooms to live together, this made Ronje explode with anger and he shouted thus,

They put me in solitary confinement, and this morning those stupid men gave me a hoe. They want to lead Mendoza and me off somewhere. I think they want to make slaves out of us. When a white man lands in a place like this, he is always superior. He makes the native his servant, not the other way round. Flip you seem to understand them. Why don't you tell them the way things are done in the civilized world? (TRS 96)

Ronje, like all other white men, is filled with cultural dominance. After a few days of their arrival, Flip was considered as the head of the white men by Shavians and as a mark of honour they planned to take him to their cattle field. Shavians by this time have started to believe that these white men are sent by God and wholeheartedly accepted them as part of their community. They never show their cattle to any other outsiders, for they believe it might make outsiders feel jealous of their wealth. As a mark of respect Flip is given the opportunity to look after the cows, while other white men are involved in various other activities. Shavian's allowed Flip to guide their cattle as a mark of respect, while the white men considered it as humiliation on their part for it is a menial work. Egbongele read the thoughts of the white men and said, "We are cattle people. Our cows are our life,

our money, and our livelihood. What greater honour can we give a new person than for him to be asked to help us in looking after our cattle” (TRS 57). Ronje mockingly commented on the action of Flip as, “You mean you were bullied into cleaning cows with savages? What an honour” (TRS 77).

Slowly the days moved by, the white men who considered Shavian’s as innocent and barbaric tribes became familiar with Shavian’s culture, political and social administration. The Shavians were pretty content with their lives and followed a system of interdependence and maintained a nonviolent subsistence with their neighbours. Though the white men had started to fit amidst the Shavians, yet Ronje and Andria considered them as uncivilized people. Though Shavians appeared to be barbaric and uncivilised they are much more civilised than the white men in many aspects.

Right from the time of their landing, Ronje considered the black Shavian’s to be inferior to him. He is attracted by the innocence and friendliness of Ayoko, the head Priest’s daughter, who has been betrothed to Prince Asogbo right from her birth. When the Priest receives the news that his wife has given birth to a daughter, he rushes to the King’s palace and announces that he has received the message from the Goddess informing him that he will beget a daughter and she will be the future queen of Shavi. After his prophecy, men from his household came there and informed that the Priest’s wife had given birth to a girl child and everyone in the palace started to exclaim that their future queen had been born. The coincidence of his prophecy and the information from his home has played its part well.

Ayoko is always considered as the next queen by the people of Shavi. She has been given some important and prominent duties of the state like taking care of the guests

like these white men. Ronje's wife had left him and married a black man. Ronje has developed an innate hatred for the black people and wanted to take revenge on them. He is allured by the innocent and childish smile of Ayoko and thought her laugh as a welcoming note to his desires. He views her in terms of racial unfairness. He defends his malicious intention as: "Black has no morals standards anyway. In England and the West Indies, most black women raised their families alone, because the women slept around, and the job of looking after themselves and their kids rested on them" (TRS 101). Filp is shocked to notice Ronje's evil intentions and he immediately cautioned him as, "Ayoko is the symbolic Mother of Shavi. If you rape her, you rape Shavi" (TRS 112).

Ronje waited for an opportunity and one day he saw Ayoko in the Ogene Lake. He makes use of the opportunity and raped the future Queen of Shavi. "To him, the Shavians were savages and Ayoko was just a servant girl. Though she fought, cried and begged, her pleading was gibberish to him, her resistance enhanced the vengeance he was taking on Shona" (TRS 102). "It is significant that the corruption (rape) by Western values in Shavi is layered within the story of a village girl who is raped by one of the Westerners who have invaded her village" (Holloway 32).

Ayoko rushed home with tears and informed her mother about the harm that had happened to her. "She walked straight to her mother's house, this problem was one that was beyond her and she suspected that, despite all her father's authority, in cases of this kind, women should stick together. She went to her mother, to cry at her breast, the breast that had given her life" (TRS 103). Siegbo, her mother and the wife of the head Priest understands the situation that her blameless daughter has been tarnished, the mother pacifies and advises her, "You have not been violated. The creature, Ronje, is an animal,

for what human would destroy a beautiful person like you?.., Dry your tears, daughter, and go about your work with a young bright face. leave the war to us, mothers” (TRS 106). Siegbo realises that if this incident was revealed to men, they would have acted in haste and would have blemished the reputation of the young daughter’s life as well the whole constancy of Shavi will be affected.

Siegbo is also sure that her daughter’s character should not be polluted at any cost. So she immediately intimated the matter to Queen Shoshovi. Shoshovi, the queen mother declares:

We don’t kill humans in Shavi, but we do sometimes kill animals for sacrifice to Ogene, or for food. And you know my friend that animals, once they have tasted something they think is good, will always come back for more, and if they fail to get it, they wander around snatching their pleasures anywhere. It’s Ayoko today, tomorrow maybe it’ll be my daughter, the princess Ama. I’m glad you haven’t told any of the men. You’re right, we must purify our land. This is our war.

(TRS 106-107)

The women of Shavi were enraged but at the same time decided together that the matter should not be disclosed to men, since it is the problem of a woman, so they have to take care of it by themselves. Ronje who has committed an unforgiveable crime of raping the future queen tried to contact Ayoko again, the women who have been waiting eagerly for his arrival trapped him instantly. They systematically plan to punish the wrong doer. The women of Shavi found a reason “to rise above most of the structures imposed upon them by their male-dominated community through exercising collective power as daughter’s wives and members of their aged-groups” (Ezeigbo 22).

Ronje didn't reckon with the force of the women of Shavi, Shoshovi, Siegbo, Iyalode and the older palace queens, who had all gone to the Ogene lakes to make a pact to silence. A dog that bit a human must be put down. There was only one concession – if Ronje did not appear on the same spot within the next seven days, they would know that he had repented. Then they would meet again and think of their next strategy. Meanwhile, Shoshovi urged everybody to bring their fishing nets. (TRS 115)

When Ronje went to the place of offence again, eager to see Ayoko, the women who had been waiting with their weapons forcefully attacked him without providing a single minute to think, they ensnared him with their strong fishing nets. Ronje is caught in the fish net like an animal, unable to make his move, the women started to thrash him and then took him to a rocky ground where there were no traces of human beings and left him there as a prey for vultures and to be consumed by wild animals.

The women walked on for about an hour to an open space where there was not a single tree, but miles and miles of rocky sand. Here they stopped. They made sure that the net was tight, so that there was no way for Ronje to escape, without outside help. They simply left him there for the desert vultures, turned back mutely and went to their homes. They got home; their families noticed how exhausted they looked. When asked, they simply replied: 'We went to make sacrifice to Ogene'. (TRS 117)

Siegbo proved to be an admirable representation of motherhood as she restored the offended daughter physically and mentally back to strength through her heroic and

diligent actions. All the women of Shavi helped in managing the problem which shows the force of sisterhood and the unity among women. Buchi Emecheta “not only destroys myths about women’s contentment with the status quo but also gives fresh insights into women’s struggle under male domination and women’s ability to map out strategies that enabled them to survive the patriarchal society that was structured to dominate and oppress them” (Ezeigbo 6).

The absence of one white person has been intimated to the King and the King’s men started to search for Ronje. Even the head priest Anoku tried to trace out the whereabouts of Ronje through his supernatural powers, but in vain. The women kept this incident as their secret and maintained to continue protecting Ayoko and pacified her that she is not at fault and it will not undervalue her at any cost. The women under the leadership of Queen Mother have decided that the person who is guilty in this rape is Ronje and so he has to be punished not the innocent Ayoko. So they never made Ayoko feel like a victim and encouraged Ayoko to be confident and daring for the mistake is not hers.

The punishment given to Ronje explicitly showcases the mentality of the native women, who stay timid in appearance, but are also capable to turn violent and follow destructive strategy in order to penalize a person who had misbehaved with their women, this quality of sisterhood and courage are innate component of their traditions. The sisterhood among women suggests “the solidarity enjoyed by women in these groups or associations constitutes the mainstay of their survival, their control of their own affairs, and their influence on the men and on the community as a whole” (Ezeigbo 10).

The innocent Ayoko is anxious that if Ronje is found they will find the fishing nets and the special tags used by the women to trap him. If they find Ronje, then all the women who were involved in the crime will be trapped and they would be punished severely for their actions. Ayoko decides and leaves her home one midnight, goes to find Ronje, her hope does not go in vain, and she cuts the nets and releases him and informs him to run away to a distant place away from Shavi through her gestures. Ayoko the victim is the one who releases the wounded Ronje without the knowledge of her mother. After his escape she felt relaxed and consoled herself, “At least, his blood is not on our hands” (TRS 134), which portrays the naive attitude and sympathetic nature of Ayoko.

The women stand united during the ritual process of clitorisation, as it is a custom followed during their marriage ceremony. The women of Shavi are certain that if a midwife is allowed to do the clitorisation for Ayoko then their secret would be revealed and Ronje’s departure also would be found out and it would definitely spoil the serenity of Shavi. So the Queen Mother claimed that it is her right to clitorise her beloved son’s wife. Iyalode, the female priestess, sanctions and allow the queen mother to perform the clitorisation. “Emecheta’s treatment of sexual politics in her society is grounded in Igbo women’s protest against retrogressive cultural norms, such as clitoridectomy, women as baby machines, the prioritising of boys at the expense of girls, and widow inheritance.” (Umeh, *Emerging* xxxv).

During the process, the queen mother finds that Ayoko has been affected by an unusual sexually transmitted disease because of Ronje’s sexual intercourse with her. She finds that white man has left the mark of his refinement on Ayoko. The queen mother is sure that no more the matter could be kept as a secret, so she informs Siegbo, Ayoko’s

mother. “I am very very sorry. My son cannot marry your daughter, at least not yet. She has this swelling thing, look, all red and bloody. It is a strange disease. I think she must have caught it from the albino. May be your husband was right, if the albinos are carriers of disease. They must go and they must go tonight” (TRS 147).

After few days of their arrival, Flip started repairing the aircraft in his leisure time; and believed that he would be able to repair it back to its original condition. He is in need of oil to start the engine; he tried to extract oil from the plants and started to utilize it for starting the engine. Flip considers that it is his duty to take his men back to their native land safely. In the mean time, Flip finds some sparkling stones in the running water. He picks some stones thinking that one day or other he might try to find its value in his country. Andria and others came to know about the stones and they too started to collect the stones too. The white men continued their efforts and after a few months they had repaired their aircraft and were about to start their journey to their native land. Suddenly to their surprise, they found that the Prince of Shavi, Asogba, wishes to accompany them. Asogba submits his wish to his father, “I want to go with the albino people, to learn their tricks. Then when I return I will teach our young men to build and fly birds of fire....We will be the most respectful and feared people of the desert. No longer will we be a timid people hiding in a secluded oasis behind the Ogene hills....” (TRS 144).

Prince Asogbo was filled with curiosity. He is amazed by the talent of the white men for they have made the giant bird to fly again so he yearns to become skilled by Flip’s training and is ready to go with them. King Patayon dissuaded his young son, but he stated that his visit to white men’s country would strengthen his competence which would help him to rule his country much better. He informs the King’s men that their

community is lagging in technical knowledge, and if he goes to white man's country, he will learn the white man's art and he will return as a determined individual. The council of elders were in confusion to allow Asogba, their future King to go along with the white men.

When Ayoko is found to be affected by Syphilis during the clitorisation process, Queen mother has no other option other than to reveal the women's secret. When the news spreads the men of Shavi become violent, they get ready to harm the white people. Asogba, using the opportunity, runs to Flip and insists that they should leave their place at once. When Flip and his friends finally set out on their repaired aircraft, they are dazed to see Asogbo who has hidden himself in the aircraft knowing that his father would never allow him to go.

As a contrast to the Shavian hospitality that was rendered to the white group when they landed in Shavi, Asogba was straight away taken into supervision and passed on to a prison, when the aircraft landed in England because he did not possess any identity card or work permit papers with him. Though it is disgusting to the entire troop of white men, they are not in position to help Asogba. Asogba is in a shaken state initially, but he is able to understand the rules and regulations followed by the white man in a short span of time. Soon after he is taken to a larger prison where he is made to work as a manual worker and treated as a common man. The days Asogba spent in the prison has provided him a lot of wisdom. When Flip meets him after a few days, there is much transformation in the character of Asogba. He is not the same primitive Prince, for he has learnt to speak English, though not fluent, he is able to manage to interact with the white men.

Flip and Mendoza showed the stones that they had picked from Shavi. They have to find a price for those semi-precious stones. When Asogba found that the white men were interested in their sparkling stones, he made an agreement that white men should provide Shavian people with food while they provided them with stones. Asogba soon learnt to bargain and claimed vehicles and guns for their stones. Asogba has observed the life of white men and was amazed by their way of life. When he reaches Shavi again, his mind is filled with vengeance, abhorrence and desire as a repercussion of his experience in England. The unfairness and inequality beleaguered on him made him too violent and informed his people how the white men had treated him:

They dehumanized me, as they do to some blacks who come from a place called the Caribbean. But I kept my sanity and dignity because I have Shavi as my prop and because I am African. Do you know why they are here? They took the trouble to bring me back, not because they like us or care for what happened to me. They are here because they want the Ogene stones from us. We have to use the stones to get from them. They won't give us anything for nothing, which was why they didn't at first understand our kindness to them when they came here. (TRS 162)

Asogba had learnt to use guns and to drive jeeps. He returns to Shavi with a lot of food, weapons and vehicles. He has ordered his men to stop farming and to set up a pump in order to draw water. The people of Shavi are amazed with the technological improvements as they are able to get water in spite of the drought. Asogba moves around in his jeep with guns in his hand to showcase his supremacy. He is considered heroic by the youngsters of Shavi. The senior men of Shavi tried to explain to Asogba that they should not abandon farming. They also informed that depending on white men for their

food would not be advisable for a long time but Asogba is not in position to listen to the elderly. He started an army with the aim of expanding the Shavian territory by capturing the neighbouring lands. He reasoned himself as, “Hadn’t he been told that this was how England’s Empire was established? He and his man would start their expansion likewise” (TRS 171).

Shavian kingdom always remained passive and never indulged in war. Asogba threatened the neighbouring tribal people, made a sudden attack on them and stole their cattle and enslaved them. Soon the news about Asogba started to spread in the nearby tribal village. After a few attacks those people were ready to retaliate. Asogba lost many of his young men who accompanied him. In the meantime, a heavy drought occurs in Shavi and the westerners have stopped providing food stuffs for the Shavians, as the demand for the white stones have reduced. In contrast to his expectation, the demand has been reduced and with no food many people in Shavi died due to hunger. Asogba’s ambitious action has totally spoiled the calm and nonviolent life of the Shavian people. The innocent people of Shavi at the end pay a heavy price of losing many of their beloved ones. The priestess Iyalode bemoans the tragedy thus:

The drought killed many, and the people of Ongar killed the rest by taunting them and telling of your ‘desert conquests’. This killed all of the thinking men. You know that with them shame kills very fast. The talking men are still around, living and hiding behind the Shavihills. You took all the men of action with you so we have very few men left. (TRS 185)

Iyalode laments the loss of men due to extreme drought. It is Asogba's ravenous invasion for more land that leads to the death of the majority of the people. The suffering of Shavian people make Asogba realise his mistake, he is able to understand their position, he could not ask for food stuffs from westerners as they no more need the sparkling stones and he has less bullets, so he could not wage war again. In addition, since he has stopped farming there is nothing to provide for his people. Queen Mother, unable to sustain his actions, advises her son to put an end to his brutality and to start farming again by the time the population of Shavi has been reduced from thousands to a few hundred. Queen Shoshovi is the only person who informs him openly his failure as a chief, thus;

Asogba, my son, you'll have to start all over again. You've been foolish. You tampered with the peaceful life we had and now we've lost all our men, our way of life and our privacy. We have to start all over again. There are no more than fifty men in the whole of Shavi, but we have at least kept all the young children alive. Your duty now, Asogba, son of Shavi, is to help us survive... You allowed the albino people who came begging for help to know our strength, and then allowed them to rape us, to take all we had and all that made us a people. It is now for you to find a place for the New Shavi. This is your duty. Posterity will forgive you if you do so, but if you allow shame and sorrow to kill you, the future kriors will forever sing your damnation. We have been raped once, don't let us be raped twice. (TRS 186)

According to the decision of Queen Mother he marries Ayoko. Queen Mother Shoshovi hoped that the syphilis disease that has been transmitted from Ronje to Ayoko might have been cured by that time, but it has not happened, Asogba is also affected by

the disease and it leads to their death. Their friendship with the Whites has affected the whole country. “By locking in the fate of Shavi with Ayoko’s sexual fate, Emecheta underscores the interdependence of colonial and patriarchal economies” (Allan 219).

Asogba’s younger brother Viyon becomes the King, he is able to understand life much better than his brother and he started to rule Shavi following the strategy of his ancestors. It is he who teaches the ambitious Asogba the reality of life, “Remember what the Queen Mother said to you the night we returned. She said that Shavi is the Mother of us all. She has been raped once, and we must never allow her to be raped again” (TRS 187). Viyon did not want to follow the tactics of his brother. The imaginary and fantasy story ends making the people retrospect, “what exactly is civilization?” (TRS 187). “The technological and economic changes they [the whites] provoke leave the African nation much worse off than before. A return to past traditionalism for either group, however, is not satisfactory either.” (Bruner and David 11)

The novel *The Rape of Shavi* which is a perfect illustration of an allegory touches different themes in itself. The author, in an interview with Oladipo Joseph Ogundele said, “The Rape of Shavi is an allegory about how our area became raped by Europe” (Ogundele 449) as Africa was reduced “to a state of impotence and powerlessness by the colonial master” (Ezeigbo 16). The novel revolves around the theme of the invasion of the colonizers and the native people. King Kokuma’s actions resemble that of a coloniser, who treats a section of his own tribal people with a servile attitude. Shavi, though born to King Kokuma, is not provided with the same rights as his half-brothers who have been born to a queen of noble birth. “It didn’t take the King long to realise that the brain behind the scheme was

that of his half-brother, Shavi, the only man capable of thinking of freedom in Ogbe Asaba. No slave or any one born from slave parents would have done so. The King diplomatically agreed with the delegation” (TRS 29).

The coloniser believed that the natives are born with negligible rational ability. So King Kokuma demands for a huge amount, when it is paid, he is shocked and plans to kill Shavi which leads to their escape. In the future, when the Shavi people are invaded by white men King Patayon guesses was not happy, he feels that these things were new, and it is going to affect the life of Shavians. The white group who visited Shavi had not come to capture them but have come as refugees to their place.

When the colonial relationship translates to a psychological non recognition of the subjectivity of the colonized, an opportunity for a mutually beneficial cross-cultural encounter is missed. This is ultimately what happens in the Shavian encounter, because some of the Westerners bring with them the supercilious belief that any mode of living that is "strange" and unfamiliar is inherently inferior to theirs.

(Mezu 18)

Ronje, one among the white men, is not ready to accept the Shavian way of life. Eventually, his outlook symbolizes the colonizer’s superiority. In his observation, black people are of lower status and thinks thus,

Now he thought he must have been raving mad. How could he have married a girl who only knew how to fetch water, sweep compounds and had few words, apart from her smiles and her ‘Mesieres’? He would have left her behind, of course, when they managed to repair the Newark. There had been cases like that in many

parts of the world, like West Africa, Vietnam and even the Pacific Islands, where there are many pale skinned people whose fathers were EuropeansRonje didn't think that someone like Ayonko could have the dignity not to want him. She was a black girl from the desert, an object of use for any white male wanderer. He had only done what generations of his race had done before. (TRS 114-5)

Thus the arrival of the White men has brought suffering to the people of Shavi; they have forgotten their farming and their peaceful life has been totally destroyed by Asogba's initiating rivalry among his neighbouring tribes. "The Rape of Shavi is Emecheta's revalorization of traditional African thought, her critique of the entire concept of what constitutes civilization. In the final analysis, the story represents her exploratory literary foray into the nature of understanding across cultures." (Mezu 10)

The rape of the Shavi's integrity is symbolically represented by the intervention of foreign forces into the country. Ronje, the white man rapes the future queen and spoils the serenity of Shavi, women turn violent and punish him. Secondly, exploiting the natural resources, they transport sparkling white stones to their country. They promise to provide food and ammunition in return for the precious stones, once the demand for it reduces, they completely stop the deal. Thirdly, Prince Asogba being too greedy wages war to extend his territory which has fully contaminated the diplomacy of Shavi. Flip reacts like any other White men, "Flip didn't feel guilty at all that he had in a way disturbed the Shavians' quiet life. He was an academic and a scientist. His work was to invent, to discover, and that was where his responsibility ended" (TRS 176). It is he who finds the precious stones at first and thought of exporting it to their country. Though the people of Shavi faced great disasters, it was their unity that helped them to gain strength and regain their normal state.

At the end of the novel, the male inhabitants of Shavi have been devastated due to war and drought. Women prove to be the torch bearers of the society; it is Shoshovi, the queen mother who takes progressive steps along with the other women of Shavi. The women first welcome the westerns with open arms as they themselves were émigré who trekked to Shavi so they could understand the feeling of immigrants, at the same time they are ready to punish the evil doer who has brought destruction to their community. The women of Shavi too have undergone patriarchal suppression but they are able to withstand their position in spite of the struggles they faced. Usually in a patriarchal setting, female acquaintance is great because it is such a supportive and compassionate bond that often makes them endure intimidation by the domineering men.

The theme of motherhood is given foremost importance. Andria who was apprehensive shouts at the tribal women to stop their treatment, but she found that it is their native medicine that has cured her daughter. Ayoko rushes to her mother after Ronje's sexual harassment. The women together punish Ronje. Flip during the anti-nuclear protest meets Andria who is showcased as a determined mother (TRS 71) with a sole intention to save the world, which makes him to take immediate action for a common cause to save the future generation from the harms of nuclear power. Asogba exhibits humanitarian zest and emphasizes that the people embarking the crashed plane are humans for he could hear the woman cry for her wounded child, "That is the cry of a mother . . . I must go and see if they need our help. We must talk about their humanity later" (TRS 23). Ayoko forgives the sinner Ronje though he has harmed her. Ayoko, the future daughter-in-law of Shoshovi, tactfully reacts and helps Ronje in his escape before the court men could find his presence.

She quickly cut the wire and poured some water into his parched mouth, noticing his body was full of sores. With frantic gestures she conveyed to him the danger he was in. She told him to tie the cloth around his body, and go far, very far away. She ran a finger across her throat dramatically, to show him that if he was found, he would be killed. (TRS 133)

Women belonging to different classes and backgrounds are found to be united. When men protested that clitorisation for Ayoko has to be done by midwife, it is Iyalode, the female priestess defends,

Any mother can perform this operation. Shoshovi wants to do it for her future daughter. So what's the argument? Let her do it. What has it got to do with you men anyway? We don't interfere with your circumcision when you take the boys into the bush. So why can't you leave us alone? That part is our sex organ, so why should it be your problem? (TRS 147)

Women are more tactful as they are devoid of egoistic pride. This helps the women to survive the forces of cruelty. Shoshovi is not shaken like the elderly men even after witnessing devastation of their culture. She managed to overcome and ignore the things that had happened and made up her mind that it is her duty bring back Shavi to its original form, like a mother who nurtures the sick child, so she declares and encourages other men and women of Shavi thus, "We've lost all our men, our way of life and our privacy. We have to start all over again. There are no more than fifty men in the whole of Shavi, but we have at least kept all the children alive" (TRS 186).

The Queen Mother, Shoshovi represents wisdom and strives hard to bring back peace, after a profound destruction caused by Asogba's greediness and aggression. Shoshovi proves that women possess an inherent strength to uplift their community through collective activity which is their source of strength. This approach and initiative of Shoshovi and other women prove that they are filled with self-reliance. Emecheta has produced an appealing, empathetic portrait of Nigerian women who ultimately emerge strong to challenge against the powerful and arrogant forces of Westernization.