

*Retribution of a Revolutionary in
Kehinde*

Chapter VIII

Retribution of a Revolutionary in *Kehinde*

Kehinde is a story about a middle aged Nigerian woman in her mid thirties and her experience as an immigrant. She has been residing in London for almost eighteen years, right from the year 1960. Kehinde Okolo is an economically independent, educated modern woman of the postcolonial time living with her husband, Albert in London and her two loving children Joshua and Bimpe. The sudden change in the Nigerian political situation, low pay, need of better education makes the couple immigrate to England. When the story starts, they are leading a good life in London. They present two different perspectives of life in London from the point of view of the Black people. Kehinde adjusts herself and even starts appreciating the freedom that she enjoys, while Albert is not pleased. He yearns to return and considers the host country as a place where his supremacy as a husband is suppressed.

Kehinde received more pay and was treated more or less equal among the white people because of her profession, on the contrary Albert was in an inadequate recompense job so was more affected by racism in London. Her husband Albert works as a store keeper in a warehouse, while Kehinde holds a managerial position in a reputed bank named Barclays. She got this opportunity owing to her previous experience of working in a bank at her native Lagos. The oppressive force in London affects Albert and makes him long for his native land.

Immigrants usually find it difficult to adapt themselves to an alien culture, but Kehinde readily adapts to it. Kehinde has inherently developed the quality of adapting

herself to both the foreign culture and her native tradition. Kehinde, the name of the protagonist, implies the meaning “last-born of the twins” in Igbo. She is the second born of the twins, Kehinde’s mother died during childbirth. There prevails a general belief in the Igbo society that when one of the twins is alive and the other one is dead, then the living twin is considered as ill luck. Due to their customs, Kehinde is blamed by the preposterous members of her family for her mother’s death and she is regarded as if she were a curse who might bring bad fortune to the family. So her aunt Nnebogo, who has no family of her own willingly accepts to adopt Kehinde. She is sent to live along with her aunt in Lagos, where twins are thought to bring fortune. Her aunt Nnebogo raises Kehinde. Her dead twin was believed to be her guarding spirit, her Chi. “The deceased who is believed to be reborn in the new child is generally called the child’s Chi. The woman’s Chi is the alter ego of the person concerned, whose present life must be supervised and guided by circumstances” (Nwoga 65). Until she was eleven years old she did not know that she had a family of her own and she believed that Nnebogo was her mother.

One fine morning, Kehinde was taken by her close relatives to meet her father. She was unaware of the fact that she is going to leave her adopted mother Nnebogo forever, who was crying during her departure. When she reached Sokoto, she met all the members of her extended family, where she was introduced to her father. Within a day’s time, Kehinde’s life changed topsy-turvy. She had to accept the bitter reality that Nnebogo was not her mother and her biological mother had died during childbirth, her father had married another woman and he had many children. After a short stay in her native place she was sent to Catholic boarding school, because of the same superstitious reason that the living twin will bring ill luck to the family. It was her grandmother and her elder sister Ifeyinwa, who contacted her at

times. Soon after her grandma's death, her sister Ifeyinwa was married, so her contact with her family was dissipated. After completing her studies she married Albert. Kehinde and Albert decided to settle in London for better prospects.

Though they lived in London they were still rooted in Nigerian culture. They overcame nostalgia by giving preference to Nigerian foods and speaking Igbo language at home. Innately, they are attached to their Igbo culture and consider themselves as temporary emigrants in this stupendous city. "They assumed they would return eventually and build their own house in Ibuza in their home village." (K 41) They always possessed the belief that they would one day or another return to their native land and would build a house of their own to live a happy life thereafter.

Traditional Igbo women are content with their marital status, they consider that the life of a woman is fulfilled when she gives birth to a child. Kehinde is tradition bound and feels proud to project herself as the wife of Albert and as a mother of two children. Albert expresses his innate desire of going back to his native land often. Albert longs to dominate his household which is not possible in London, "...that type of life is not possible here, in a country where a woman is Queen and where it's beginning to look as if we're soon going to have a woman Prime Minister. The trouble starts when women get educated...." (K 35-36). Albert's conservative mind is not ready to accept women being education and acquiring power. His native cultural ideology does not permit him to acknowledge women taking up the lead. He declares his intimate feelings to his friend thus:

Here, I am nobody, just a shopkeeper. I am fed up with just listening to my wife and indulging her. The only alternative is to go to the pub, but going to stand

among all the drunken whites is no solution ...Here she was full of herself, playing the role of the white, middle class woman, forgetting she was not only black but an Igbo woman, just because she worked in a bank and earned more than he did. (K 35)

In Nigeria, women were considered subordinate to their husbands. In London, women were provided equal rights, so Kehinde was treated “as a friend, compatriot and confidant” and spoke “with her husband less formally than women living in the heart of Igbo land, like her sister Ifeyinwa, who were in more traditional marriages” (K 6). Kehinde is not a person who utilises the chance erroneously; she knows her responsibility and shows an immense respect for their tradition but tries her level best to maintain her individuality. In spite of living in London and earning more money than her husband, Kehinde always followed the restrictions imposed upon a wife in Igbo custom. “The Igbo woman in her know how far to go. She could tell Albert what she liked, but would not malign his relatives. Not to his face at any rate” (K 22). In Nigeria women were not permitted to sit along with her husband to discuss various matters. The position of women in Nigeria is rightly explained by Ketu Katrak as, “Whatever a girl or woman’s particular negotiation - speaking against, being complicit within, or resisting tradition- female protagonists experience self-exile, a sense of not belonging to themselves, and particularly not to their female bodies” (158).

Though they were staying far away from their native place, there is always Albert’s sister’s interference who writes letters persuading him to come back to their native land. His sister’s letters are also one of the reasons which ignite his burning desire of returning to Igbo land where patriarchy was the norm. Kehinde thinks that if they shift

to Nigeria she will lose her individuality, as her husband's family members adhere to patriarchal cultural codes strictly. She is bewildered about her life in Nigeria, and innately afraid that patriarchal powers will definitely not permit her to take independent decisions and her freedom will be curtailed. So she says, "I haven't a clear vision what I am suppose to be looking for there" (K 22). On the other hand, Albert longs to go back to Nigeria because there he could certainly dominate his wife as their culture considers the husband as the head of the family. He is dissatisfied with his position as a life partner where equal rights are given to both the counterparts. He hates the limits prescribed in the western world and so he decides to settle in Nigeria. Kehinde was aware of her husband's mindset, "behind the veneer of westernisation, the traditional Igbo man was alive and strong, awaiting an opportunity to reclaim his birthright" (K 35).

Nigeria is a man's world; patriarchal force controls the entire domain of social norms. In their native culture, male supremacy is authorised and women were considered as subordinates. The autonomy accorded to women in London annoys him. In spite of the long stay in London, Albert is not able to accept the cultural ethos of Western ideology where gender bias is less. He utters his distress as, "But I want to go back to the way of life my father had, a life of comparative ease for men, where men were men and women were women and one was respected as somebody..." (K 35). He likes to live a typical Igbo life where men will be given predominant importance.

After two decades of their arrival in the foreign country they still lack a sense of belongingness. They express their feeling as: "... two decades later despite complaints about racism, unemployment, dignity robbed, would still be there" (K 115). While the couple face problems in assimilating to the host culture, their son Joshua and daughter

Bimpe who are the second generation immigrants are comfortable with the host culture. Albert's salary was much less than his wife's income that was a predominant reason for his insecure feeling. Albert suffers from racial prejudice in England as he works in a subordinate position and his income is less which creates an inferiority complex which makes him more intensely yearn for his native country. Albert expresses his confusion explicitly as, "We are in a strange land, where you do things contrary to your culture" (K 15). In spite of the psychological tumult he undergoes, he plays his role as a perfect husband and a good father in London. According to Christine W. Sizemore, "Albert's willingness to return to Nigeria where polygamy is practiced is a clear indication of his being "a traditional African patriarch" (378). Albert wants to stick on to their native cultural practices in order to dominate his wife.

Returning to the native land is certainly an ecstatic moment for the immigrants. Albert resigns his job and starts arrangements for his return journey. He was shocked by the sudden news of Kehinde's third pregnancy. He has never thought of such hindrance, he persuades her to abort because Kehinde was waiting for a promotion, by which they will be monetarily benefited and he will get sufficient money for his travel to Nigeria. Kehinde tries her best to convince him, but he seems to be very stern in his decision. Kehinde ponders, "I have to go through with it. My husband will kill me if I don't. But really, inside I am confused. Part of me doesn't want any more children, another part wants to keep this one, just this one" (K 26).

Kehinde reveals her sorrow to her friend Mariammo, who is also from Nigeria. Kehinde expresses her distress to Mariammo thus; "Only say, sometimes I do not understand that man I marry. He dey worries more for my job here for bank than for

pikin” (K 9). The thought of abortion makes Kehinde feel as if a part of her body is taken off from her. Kehinde told Albert it was a boy baby and she felt that it was her father’s chi that had come to her as a baby to stay with her. Albert did not offer her any consolation to overcome her loss. “She felt like a boat adrift on a stormy night, lashed by the winds. Albert could not help her . . . she was alone, in spite of what they said about marriage being two people in one” (K 33).

Albert always adapts to the norms convenient to him either from native or host culture. Albert decided to immigrate to London when they were in financial need, he moved with his wife to an alien country for better job opportunities. When he had earned enough money and after ensuring economic independence, he decided to return to his native land. When Albert found that his plans are disrupted by Kehinde’s pregnancy, he goes against the Nigerian culture which doesn’t approve abortion. Albert defends his decision thus; “I know abortion is wrong but we are in a strange land, where you do things contrary to your culture” (K 15).

Kehinde’s cheerfulness of being pregnant is ruined to pieces at the command of her husband to abort their child. In opposition to her deep-rooted cultural beliefs, she half heartedly undergoes abortion only to fulfil Albert’s wish. His attitude towards Kehinde’s body is, “...convenient vehicles which, when they took on an inconvenient burden, could be emptied of it by the same means” (K 17). Kehinde agrees for abortion and when it was over, she underwent tubectomy in spite of Albert’s protest as a mark of her individuality. The process was too excruciating for her, she feels that he could never feel the pain that she had undergone. When she returns from hospital, she realises, “He had nothing to offer her” (K 33). Kehinde sacrifices herself to take care of her family.

Nigerian culture expects women to subservient to men; the husband consider's his wife as a mere reproducing machine and a source of sexual pleasure. Kehinde, though educated, holds a better job than her husband, earns more money than him, takes care of the family and is grateful to him because he is the father of her children and considers him as head of the family. Kehinde's situation authentically proves that gender bias is perpetual in Nigerian tradition.

Albert wishes to celebrate his departure to his native country by arranging a party for his friends. Kehinde readily accepts and arranges for the party according to his command. The ambivalence of the house was planned in accordance with the Nigerian traditional custom. Kehinde and Albert were dressed in their traditional Igbo style and provided their guests with purely Nigerian food. Albert demanded Kehinde to buy presents for the guests as per their Nigerian custom. Kehinde agreed to his wishes and prepared a traditional Nigerian party. She spends a lot of money arranging food items, buying gifts and to present themselves in the Nigerian outfit during the party. At the end of the great celebration, Kehinde expected that Albert would thank her for all the efforts taken by her, because she had taken much pains to make the party a grand success, but there was no reaction of gratitude from Albert. He was found to be occupied by his own thoughts of having his requirements fulfilled. Kehinde was sad because Albert had asked her to stay in London to sell their house but he never cared about being parted from his wife.

Kehinde loves her husband truly and does not wish to send him to their native Nigeria but the affection that she had for him made her acknowledge his wishes. She might have gone along with him, but he wanted her to stay in London to sell their house. Though his travel was decided after good planning, they were not able to sell their house to their

expectations. After the departure of Albert, Kehinde started to reduce her expenses to save money for her children and her travel to Nigeria. She feels that if Albert was there with them, then it is right on her part to prepare varieties of food to satisfy him but now it is she and her children who could manage with the things available. This attitude led to much discomfort for her children, Joshua and Bimpe. They argue with her for not preparing varieties of food. It is a Nigerian attitude that the women would not give much preference or importance to themselves when the head of the family is not at home.

Kehinde is leading a typical Nigerian life though she is living in London. She is more proud of her status as the wife of Albert, than her economic and professional success. A woman would be respected only when she is with her husband; immaterial of her professional success she would be treated as nothing in the Nigerian society. Mary Elikwu is a single parent who takes care of her children alone. When Mary Elikwu arrives at the party, Kehinde avoids her. Kehinde has a strong belief that a woman without a husband need not be respected. Mary Elikwu has six children and left her husband because she could no longer tolerate the continuous harassment. Though Mary is recognised as a well educated woman, Kehinde is scornful. She thinks, “She was a fallen woman who had a no sense of decorum... a woman who refused to work at her marriage” (K 38-39). Kehinde was bewildered by Mary Elikwu’s attitude: “What is the matter with this woman? Not wanting to be called ‘Mrs’ when every Nigerian woman is dying for the title. Even doctors or professors or heads or heads of companies still call themselves ‘Professor (Mrs)’ or ‘Dr (Mrs)’. This woman must be crazy. Is she bigger than all of them then? I don’t understand her” (K 39).

Kehinde's uneasiness with the fellow Nigerian woman, Mary Elikwu is the indication of her cultural beliefs. Kehinde is not ready to speak on behalf of the affected lady, who was harassed by her husband. This attitude of Kehinde is due the traditional ideologies that she has imbibed. In an Interview, Emecheta expressed concern that most of the Nigerian women, "do not practice sisterhood like their foreign counterparts ... half of the problem rests with the women. They are so busy bitching about one another; the men say the women are acting just as expected" (Umeh 176).

Shortly after the departure of Albert, their children followed him and they were enrolled in a boarding school in Lagos. Albert and the children seem to be well settled which is indicated by their occasional phone calls to her. Albert, who had promised to take her at the earliest, never shows interest in her return; whenever she asks about it he slips away by altering the topic. It is too strange for her, but she pacifies herself that he needs time to settle himself and to settle their children and she remains passive in London. She waited to sell their house and eagerly expected to join her family in Nigeria. Nigerian acquaintances who were residing in London started treating Kehinde with contempt as she was living alone for a long period of time.

Kehinde's close friend and colleague, Mariammo with whom she always confides all her secrets, has stopped contacting her. Moriammo asks: "Then why do you no go to Lagos, go join Alby? I tell you say, the girls there are crazy for any man just return from England" (K 51). Mariammo's husband, Tunde prevented her from meeting Kehinde saying, "what was Mariammo, a good Muslim wife, doing at all with a woman who had sent all her family away so that she could have a good time? Any man could go to her now, had Mariammo thought of that?" (K 94).

Mariammo was estranged from her husband for a long time; their reconciliation had taken place a few months ago. Occasional visits of her friend Mariammo provided a slight consolation to Kehinde. When she stops her visits, Kehinde feels detached and alienated from her neighbourhood. She would remain a respectable Nigerian woman solely based on her marital status. Kehinde feels that she has no identity of her own except being Albert's wife. She felt, "without Albert, she was half-person ..." (K 59).

Kehinde resigns her job and returns to Nigeria, against the displeasure of Albert. "Kehinde imagined how it would feel to be completely dependent on Albert, a situation that would be quite strange to her. How could she expect Albert to take care of all her financial needs, just because she was married to him? And with all his sisters and relations watching? It was too un-African" (K 52). The first astonishment was the change that has happened in Lagos, she is stunned by the chaotic hustle and bustle that filled the entire place. "... they were plunged into a maelstrom of fumes, car horns, careering big yellow buses, minibuses packed to capacity and people: the heart of Lagos, Lagos Island-Eko. Kehinde, unaccustomed to the noise and chaos was startled, but Albert steered his way adroitly through narrow side roads cluttered with abandoned cars...." (K 68).

Kehinde is happy as she is going to join her family. When she arrived, Albert came to the airport; she was shocked at his behaviour as he remained calm throughout their journey. When the car stopped in front of a new bungalow, a girl ran towards them and helped them in unpacking. Kehinde was dumbstruck by the young, attractive and elegant appearance of a pregnant lady with a small boy near her who stood in the doorway smiling mildly.

Her elder sister Ifeyinwa along with her numerous children welcomed her wholeheartedly. She was surrounded by all their relatives and neighbours who were eager to speak to her. When she entered the hall she found that the sophisticated furniture which she had sent from London enriched the ambience of the room. Ifeyinwa took her to a room furnished with a single bed. Kehinde was startled as she had never slept alone after her marriage. Kehinde was stopped by her sister from talking to Albert and instructed her not to call her husband by his name. "*Sh . . . sh . . . sh*, not so loud! Don't call your husband by his name here-o. We hear you do it over there in the land of White people. There, people don't have respect for anybody. People call each other by the name their parents gave them, however big the person. We don't do it here-o. Please Kehinde, don't-o" (K 70). When Kehinde tried to go out to find Albert, she was stopped by her sister "Where are you going? Come back in, just come back. You will see Joshua's father later. Just come first." Her eyes were red and her voice was agitated. "Where do you think you are? This is Nigeria, you know" (K 70).

Kehinde lost her control by the continuous warning of her sister and retorted. "Educate me, please. Have I just got married to Albert and you are now going to tell me what marriage is all about? Where is he, anyway?" (K 70). Her incessant questions made Ifeyinwa to reveal that Albert has married a young girl called Rike. He utilized his privilege as a Nigerian and become polygamous. Rike, Albert's second wife, is highly educated, a Ph.D. holder, working as a Lecturer in the university. They have been married for two years, she has given birth to a boy and was expecting another baby. "... within twenty four months he had fathered a son and had another on the way" (K 86). Kehinde was stunned that her children never protested when they came to know about Albert taking a

second wife. “She had a feeling of wanting to die. This was supposed to be her family, and it was getting on perfectly well without her” (K 87).

Ifeyinwa convinced her that she could hold her position as the mother of Albert’s children and the son Ogochukwu, born to Rike would certainly be a great moral support to her son Joshua. Ifeyinwa’s husband has two wives and they both stayed in the same house, which has only two rooms. She feels that at least Kehinde has got an exclusive room. Bimpe was cautioned not to disclose this matter to her mother because Kehinde was staying alone and this news might certainly traumatize her. Kehinde remained speechless for a while, unable to react to the information. At the party she was greeted and was surrounded by their relatives. Albert remained isolated and inaccessible.

Kehinde pacified herself that she was provided a better room than the room which was provided for Rike. She was advised thus; “I tell you; Rike is a clever African woman, in spite of her book knowledge. But don't worry, you'll soon get used to it, and then you'll be wondering why you worried in the first place. Albert is a good, hardworking man. Just relax and enjoy your life” (K 74). Rike has completely imbibed the Nigerian cultural values so she never had contemplation about her qualification or her status as a second wife to Albert. Ifeyinwa says,

Ah, you see what I mean. You forgot it was Lagos he was returning to. There are many ways of catching a fish, and Rike used the cleverest. She met Albert when he was low, with neither job nor accommodation, and presented herself as a ministering angel, even taking him to her church. She became so enmeshed in his life that when the children returned, Joshua thought she was one of their aunties. And when he found out, he soon became reconciled to it. (K 74)

Kehinde was broken and when she questioned him on his betrayal, he neither felt guilty, nor apologised to her. He said, "...I know you are angry. But look back, Kehinde. My father had two wives, yours had three, so what sin did I commit that is so abominable?" (K 86). He became a typical Nigerian accepting the conservative view that "a man needs many wives" (K 86). The affection that she had for Albert was shattered to pieces by his sloppy and egotistical answer. She remembers that Albert, condemned polygamy when they were in love and stated "... polygamy was degrading for women which he based on his own experience with his father's two wives" (K 84).

Kehinde begins to realise that she has to remain calm at least for the sake of her children. She does not have any other alternative other than to remain quiet. Rike never demonstrates opposition to their patriarchal culture. She is ready to accept Joshua and Bimpe and to take care of them as her own, according to the dictates of Albert. Kehinde on the other hand realises that she does not have any rights to speak against her culture which always favours men "... it is considered manly for men to be unfaithful" (K 46).

Rike and her family considered the arrival of Kehinde as a great threat. She informs her mother, and they arrange special prayers to drive away Kehinde and to secure a safe place for their daughter. Kehinde was really afraid of Rike's education and beauty. The next thing that suffocated Kehinde was the rules and regulations that were prescribed by Albert's sisters.

One day she was informed that they are going to visit her children in their boarding school. It was the only consolation to Kehinde, she was too happy to meet her children. When they were about to start, Kehinde tried to sit beside Albert in the front

seat as she usually did in London. Suddenly Albert's elder sister starts to shout, "... 'Who takes the place of honour' in his home. Mama Kaduna (Albert's sister) scoffs at Kehinde, "What is wrong with you?...When we, the relatives of the head of the family, are here, we take the place of honour by our Albert....So, go to the back and let us move on" (K 88). The words of Mama Kaduna makes Rike laugh silently, Kehinde was crushed by the treatment of Mama Kaduna.

She has been Albert's wife for seventeen years; she has never felt such an insult before. She was made to be seated along with Rike and the maid at the back seat. She started crying, unable to control herself in front of her husband's new wife. She was also reprimanded for calling her husband by his name. These types of restrictions which she had to undergo made Kehinde to feel the entire household as a prison.

Kehinde is no longer able to enjoy the freedom that she had experienced in London. Initially Kehinde admits and acknowledges the societal norms, which is rightly put by Kate Miller as "interior colonization" of women by men is "sturdier than any form of segregation," such as class "more uniform and, certainly more enduring."(255-256). "Because of their patriarchal socialization, mostly by their own mothers, they too see life from a male perspective and often accept value system and rules which follow from that." (Bazin 39)

Rike has accepted the traditional norms and submits passively to the restrictions imposed on women in the Nigerian society in spite of securing a doctorate and a respectable job. Albert's detachment, his sister's interference in all the household matters and her victimized state left Kehinde depressed. Kehinde learns to admire women like Mary Elikwu,

whom she used to condemn for not being with her husband. Mary had left her husband because he abused her. She took her children along with her when she left him. Kehinde considers Mary Elikwu's life as a paradigm and gets ready to become independent.

Kehinde stays in Nigeria for a year but she is unable to accept the norms that degrade the status of women. Kehinde decided that leaving Nigeria is a better option for her. She is neither like Ifeyinwa, who lacks education, nor like Rike who though educated is ready to be subservient to the patriarchal forces. Eventually, she writes a letter to her friend Mariammo seeking her help. Kehinde writes to Moriammo, "Honestly, Moriammo, Albert has humiliated me, and the worst is that I have to depend on him financially. He gave me the first housekeeping money in over eighteen years of marriage, and I had to take it" (K 94). Kehinde feels humiliated because "African women have always been, by necessity, independent and responsible coworkers and decision-makers" that strive for "human harmony and survival" (Hudson-Weems 28-31) Mariammo lends a helping hand by sending money that Kehinde needs to reach London.

Kehinde leaves her native country without informing Albert. Her action is symbolised as an unavoidable choice to be taken by an expatriate who has undergone a hard and crucial period of adjustment in a different country and thus she feels estranged in her own native country. She elucidates the reason behind her decision to her sister as, "never lived in a polygamous family before, except when [she] came to visit [her]" and she was not willing "to go through all this again now" (K 10). Her hatred towards polygamy is due to her self-righteous spirit. "Women's existence is strung between traditionalism and modernity in ways that make it extremely difficult for them to attain personal freedom without severe sacrifices or compromise" (Olaniyen 585)

Ifeyinwa's constant support and guidance prohibited Kehinde from losing her confidence. Her sister helped her to survive in the domineering patriarchal environment. Ifeyinwa regarded it as her duty to prevent her sister from leaving Nigeria, as she is the only person who could counsel Kehinde about their tradition, but later she accompanies her to the airport. "With gratefulness, Kehinde counts her riches because she has her biological sister, her spirit twin and an adopted sister who all provide her with support and understanding" (Berrian 175). Kehinde is astounded when her tradition bound sister suggests to her even to take another man, "Kehinde glimpsed the spirit trapped behind the veneer of tradition" (K 106).

Kehinde's decision to return to London is viewed as a positive development process in immigrant literature, "... in which the individual critically assesses his past and present situation and acts according to the conclusions he draws in order to improve his situation" (qtd. in Hawley 339). Therefore, Kehinde's return is represented by Homi K. Bhabha as: "the return of the diasporic, the postcolonial [hybrid]" (319). Excitement engulfed Kehinde, when she arrived at London. She feels at home after the disheartening developments in her family. Her happiness is expressed thus: "Outside, though it was cold, the Sun was shining, and she felt a surge of elation. Only a few hours before, still in Nigeria, she had thought the whole world was collapsing. Now she noticed that the trees the council had planted along the street were just beginning to bud. In a few days, they would burst into bloom, and it would be spring." (K 108). This spring image denotes that Kehinde will flourish on British soil. She felt homesick while she was in Nigeria. She was in a disheartened state in her house in Nigeria so she yearns for the good olden days she spent in London. She thinks about the seasonal changes that occur in London to which she is accustomed to for years.

...this was October, autumn in England. The wind would be blowing, leaves browning and falling. In a few weeks, the cherry tree in her back garden would be naked of leaves, its dark branches twisted like old bones. On a day like this, after the Friday shopping, her feet would be stretched in front of her gas fire, while she watched her favourite serials on television until she was tired and until her eyes ached. Autumn in England. (K 96)

Kehinde feels content at her old house in London, as she can be independent, need not pretend or be docile to others. She “do[es] not live *between* countries, but instead attempts to form a psychic bridge across the metaphysical space separating them” (Hawley 339).

She got out of the taxi in front of the house in Leyton ... dipped her hand into her coat pocket and brought out the front door key. ... house welcomed her like a lost child. ... a voice inside her sang out, “Home, sweet home!” ... The For Sale sign flapped forlornly in the wind ... with unexpected strength she wrenched it from the ground. ‘This house is not for sale’, she declared....; ‘This house is mine’. (K 107-8)

Suddenly she could hear the voice of her Chi, it declares “Home sweet Home!” Kehinde with false pretence accused the voice: “This is not my home. Nigeria is my home”. When she utters the words, she is well aware that her words are not true, but Taiwo would not allow her to stand on her point, it once again emphasizes that “We make our own choices as we go along. This is yours. There’s nothing to be ashamed of in that” (K 141).

Kehinde changes the signboard, “This house is not for sale...This house is mine” (K 10). She is firm in her decision that the house belonged to her. Albert and her children are welcome if they wish to come in, but on her conditions, not on their terms. Kehinde decides to take up a job, she tries in the same place where she worked, but there are a lot of changes that have taken place in the meantime. Kehinde witnesses cultural preference on her return to London. She experiences the thorn of racial discrimination prevailing in London. She finds it hard to get a respectable job. Mariammo says, “You got that job a long time ago, and you were stupid to leave. You can’t get such jobs now. You never know, with your degree you may even be regarded as being overqualified. An educated black person in a responsible job is too much of a threat. White people don’t feel comfortable in their presence” (K 125). She works as a cleaner in a hotel where she encounters unbearable racial oppression. “Kehinde felt so low, she wanted to cry. Allah Baba! Albert had reduced her. Where were the dignity and pride in herself . . .” (K 129)?

She was offered a chance to teach English to a rich Arab’s young wife. She was disturbed by the presence of the Arab and his crafty looks and rude behaviour. She marched out of that demeaning situation when the Arab ordered Kehinde to, “[t]ake your clothes off! I want to see what a naked black woman looks like. . . .I’ll pay you” (K 131). She repudiates to be intimidated. “The sheikh might want to see what a black woman’s body looked like, but that body was not going to be hers” (K 132). Racism has not affected the rich Arab sheikh, his plentiful money has attracted even the white people “oil money makes people colour-blind,” (K 126) and she was dominated and compelled to bend down before his economic status. Kehinde is not ready to give up her self-respect on any account, she retrospects that if at all she has to feel angry she must be angry “With God, for creating

her a woman? With men like the Sheikh and Albert, who felt women should just acquiesce in any ridiculous plan they made? With other women, who in their ignorance pass judgment on their sisters? Whose fault was it?" (K 132). Kehinde as a black woman faced not only patriarchal constraints at her home town but also racism in London.

Kehinde joins the university and obtains a degree in Sociology, and eventually gets a government job which is equal to her earlier position in the bank. Thus Kehinde transmutes into a self-realised person. Bimpe writes a letter to her mother congratulating her for her success. "Congratulations! I can't believe that in such a short time, a little over three years, you could get a degree! I know you said you were determined to be a university graduate" (K 10). In the meantime Albert had married another woman from Northern Nigeria. Albert sent his elder son to London to demand his rights to Kehinde's property. He says: "We men must stick together, and look after our women. The house in London is yours. Make sure it goes under your name. Your mother loves you very much and would be happy to see you make your claim ..." (K 140).

Motivated and encouraged by his father's words, Joshua arrives at London as a young man, with the hope of selling the house and taking the money to his father. To his astonishment he was not able to find his timid mother who lived for the sake of her family, rather he found a more self-assured and balanced mother. The nascent Igbo 'man', Joshua, meets a completely transformed mother, who was capable enough to endure without male support, not just a indigenous Igbo woman who shoulders the family's responsibilities alone.

She had gone by herself and got a degree, and survived without any of them.

Joshua had not bargained for what that meant ... She seemed to be glorying in it. Enjoy shedding her duties. Most Igbo women liked taking on the whole family's burden, so that, they would be needed. His mother no longer cared. How could you deal with a rebel who happened to be your mother? (K 141)

Kehinde was affected by his words; nothing could stop her from her decisions. Claiming his rights he announces, "This is my house, and I want him out", Kehinde says "it's not quite like that. This is my house, though it may be yours one day" (K 10). Kehinde asserts her individuality claiming her rights and privileges. Joshua orders her as though "he had the answer to the world's problems, having been to Africa, where young men were made to feel they owned heaven and earth" (K 137), she neglects his talk and thrashes him by her promising reply. "I did when you were young. My whole life was wound around your needs, but now you're a grown man! Mothers are people too; you know... I just don't have the energy to be ..." (K 139).

Kehinde firmly informs her son that there is no doubt that the house belongs to her and that he has no rights to sue over it. She asserts, "Claiming my right does not make me less of a mother, not less of a woman. If anything, it makes me more human" (K 141). Joshua reminds her role as a traditional mother. She says, "I'm still his wife, if I want to be, and I'm still your mother. It doesn't change anything" (K 138), which shocks Joshua.

Joshua feels that his mother has completely transformed; she appears to be a new person, in his view a mother is a sacrificing soul who lives for her children and remains submissive all through her life. Albert provokes Joshua to claim his rights and he asks his

mother to transfer the house in his name. The reaction of Albert and his son is rightly described by Brenda Berrian, “Now, Albert (indirectly) and their son (directly) are jolted awake when they confront a wife/mother who lays claim to her property and rights on her turf” (178). Albert and Joshua are shocked by the reaction of Kehinde, they have not expected such a counteraction from Kehinde. She makes him understand his position, by emphasizing her own freedom. Kehinde returns to London in pursuit of economic independence and to insist her protest against polygamy. The novel ends as “the living Kehinde” declares “‘now we are one’... to the spirit of her long dead Taiwo” (K 141).

This closing passage proclaims Kehinde’s achievement of an integrated subjectivity, the healing of her divided self and the embrace of her distinctive *chi*. She has reached the successful culmination of a journey that has taken her across successive cultural borders worked out in the doubled plots of her cyclical movement from tradition to hybrid diasporic identity. (Wyat 101)

Kehinde yearned to be respected as a married woman who is restrained to the roles dictated by the society. She has lived for her husband and children, now she has started living for herself. This development of Kehinde is an indication of women breaking the patriarchal forces. She has a respectable job and was surrounded by friends, who understand her; more than anything she could breathe the air of independence. Christine Sizemore explains, “Like Emecheta herself, Kehinde learns that marriage and homeland are not the only ‘places’ for women. She discovers that there is room in the city of London for the diasporic and the post colonial to achieve both place and space. In London Kehinde finds a home, an education, a career and a lover” (211).

Emecheta emphasises that education leads women towards progression. In the postcolonial period, women devised their own strategy to deal with the patriarchal restrictions. Ketu Katrak commenting thus, “Female covert resistances are undertaken with self consciousness and remarkable creativity that decides to take risks and confront domination selectively and strategically in the interest of self preservation” (3)

Emecheta expresses the dilemma of women who challenge their patriarchal culture and fight to redeem their self-esteem. Though Kehinde breaks herself from the patriarchal bondage she retains her African identity. Kehinde revolts against the norms which treat women as subordinates. Kehinde emphasises that the society has no rights to interfere in the life of an individual especially – women. A complete transformation occurs in the protagonist who comes out of the shell that has imprisoned and defined her roles as mother and wife.

Kehinde’s self-realisation occurs in two instances in the novel. The first indication is when she is forced to abort her child which makes her understand that she is not allowed even to choose her rights to have her own child because of the patriarchal domination. “It is Kehinde’s unborn “man-child” that begins her process of recognizing her worth as a woman when she realizes Albert’s selfish prioritizing of his ambitions over their lives ” (K 15). The next instance is when Albert becomes polygamous by marrying Rike, Kehinde feels that her position as his wife is shattered. She is unable to accept her husband’s betrayal.

Kehinde breaks all traditions, decides to assert her worth and her individuality as a woman. She empowers herself and is able to say “I have a degree and a job at the Department of Social Services. I’m enjoying meeting people and leading my own life” (K 10). Thus

Kehinde emerges as a self-determining and strong-minded character. Emecheta comments "... the black woman survivor just like her ancestors survived slavery... these women try to make the best of a bad situation" (Ogundele 455). Kehinde completely gives up her patriarchal mindset and assumes a new identity and proves to be the prototype of the new woman.

The New Woman typically values self-fulfillment and independence other than the stereotypically feminine ideal of self-sacrifice, believes in legal and sexual equality; often remains single because of the difficulty of combining such equality with marriage; is more open about her sexuality than 'Old Woman'; is well educated and reading great deal; has a job; is athletic or otherwise physically vigorous and, accordingly, prefers comfortable clothes (sometimes male attire) to traditional female garb. (Finney 196)

Kehinde through her indomitable spirit has proved that women can secure an equitable place in society, by breaking the patriarchal forces. She declares that she is no more "the carrier of everybody's burdens any more" (K 10). Kehinde expects that women should be respected.

Emecheta's point of view is that such types of self-determined women would come up in life. In an interview, Emecheta states the assertion of individuality through Kehinde's characterisation that Nigerian women "coped with the changes from one culture to the other and survived...Kehinde came here [London], went back, and then returned after a long stay. It shows the spirit of Black women toward survival" (Ogundele 455). It is Nigerian women's camaraderie towards each other, Kehinde, Ifeyinwa and Moriammo

reflect as they have a “healthy love for [themselves], [their] sisters, and [their] community which allows [them] to continue [their] struggle and work” (Okeke 247). Through this relationship one could notice that Kehinde remains powerfully grounded to the Igbo culture no matter how far she drifts herself geologically.

The bonding of women characters was found to be string throughout the novel, the protagonist was safeguarded by different women characters during her crisis, when she was admitted in the hospital for abortion, and she was supported by a white woman, who was also a patient, was a great solace to Kehinde. Her dead twin sister Taiwo remains as her Chi and guides and scaffolds her. Her sister Ifeyinwa remains a constant support providing mental strength. Mariammo, Kehinde’s friend, helps her to return to London by sending money. Thus Kehinde was able to escape from the disgusting patriarchal domination and could prove herself successful in the foreign land. Female bonding provided the required emotional help for the victims to overcome oppression.

Emecheta’s narrative works ultimately toward creating a space in which Kehinde is mostly free of her culture's patriarchal baggage while sustaining a strong African identity ... Thus, asserting herself - defined subjectivity. Kehinde comes to terms with her chi, ending the novel with the words. “Now we are one,” The unity found at the end of the novel acknowledges the relationship between cultural minutiae and socio-political history and, ultimately, it acknowledges the contradictions and possibilities of living successfully as a woman and an African. (Coleman 78-79)

Kehinde’s makes a sensible and cautious combination of the values from both the cultures. Thereby Kehinde becomes a bicultural and completes the process of cultural

transplantation successfully. Innes explains it as, “Women characters ...explore what it means to decide that England is home.... The male characters rarely make this decision; as far as they are concerned, home-making in its wider sense is not what they are about. They remain birds of passage, transients [or become returnees], while women seek the ‘final passage’” (22).

Women in Nigeria are marginalised, they are not allowed to rise above their specific niche in life, if she tries to come out of it, it is considered as rebellious act that would break the social construct, and looked as a revolt of disagreement, inconsistency which would lead to a dangerous end. Women are made to surrender to the demands of cultural practices only brave women emphasize for their right to equality, dignity and freedom. The societal setup is purely patriarchal and deprived of equality.

Kehinde, the protagonist, is an archetype of marginalized African women who protests against oppressive forces and at last attains her own identity. Kehinde breaks the bonds that define a good Nigerian wife and she transforms into a self-actualised person. Most of the women protagonists of Emecheta’s novels are filled with heroic qualities; Kehinde seems to be a unique and exceptional example of a Nigerian Igbo woman who creates her own identity by overcoming all hurdles. Through Kehinde’s character, Emecheta “. . . implores women to redefine their identity as strong, independent and successful individuals” (Mohan 84).