

*Resisting and Rebelling Patriarchy in  
Double Yoke*

---

## Chapter V

### **Resisting and Rebellious Patriarchy in *Double Yoke***

Buchi Emecheta in *Double Yoke* discusses the problem of women's liberation in modern society. In this novel, Emecheta depicts the struggles of an educated African woman to overcome the confines of a domineering patriarchal constitution that engulfs her. The story revolves around the central character Nko, a young modern African woman who belongs to a small village in Nbampka, and her lover Ete Kamba. Ete Kamba belongs to the nearby village Mankong, he is twenty-four years old and is a final year student in the English Department. He is a young man struggling to cope with modernity and the native culture. He is a prototype of the typical African men; though he appears to be modern externally he believes in traditional norms.

The story starts with the introduction of the students waiting for their lecturer at their classes in the University of Calabar. All the students are fascinated towards the newly joined young, dynamic lecturer Miss Bulewao, who is known for her skill in teaching creative writing. The main reason behind her magnetism is that she stands apart from the other lecturers who taught them the dry concepts and forced them to swot up, whether they have understood it or not, while Miss Bulewao encouraged the students to be of their own and to express their thoughts. Miss Bulewao has captured the attention of her students through her audacity and self-confidence. She is neither showcasing nor exaggerating rather remains confident and she maintains uniqueness in her approach when compared with other Professors of their university. She arouses admiration among the students “with her masculine briefcase and quiet tread” (DY 3).

Miss Bulewao's appearance is so simple. "She was a very insignificant looking female-not the type the boys had imagined a writer to be. She was so ordinary, more like any mum, any farmer's wife" (DY 3). Her individuality stimulates the appreciation amongst the people around her. Miss Bulewao appears to be an ordinary woman, but the tone of self-confidence that lies within her spirits differentiates her from other lady professors of the university. Though Ete Kamba admires Miss Bulewao, at times he wishes that "she were a man!" (DY 2). He feels ashamed of admiring a woman, so he wished her to be a man such was his patriarchal mindset. He could not accept the thought of considering a woman as an exemplar. At one point he sarcastically blames himself as "He was wishing to be as successful as a woman: he was wishing to adopt the method used by an ordinary woman in the field of Arts! How low could one sink?" (DY 9). He is still not able to digest the fact that he was trying to follow the footsteps of a woman. According to him, it is a humiliation as he strongly believed that men are greater than women in all aspects. So Ete feels ashamed to confess that he considered her as his role model.

Miss Bulewao's classes on creative writing are interesting and captivating. During one of her sessions on creative writing, she instructs her students to write "an imaginary story of how you would like your ideal Nigeria to be" (DY 5). This task has been given in order to provide practice to her students in writing creatively. Each student started to write their ideas while Ete chose to write his own story; it is through his narration the readers are able to get to know about his past.

Ete Kamba is the first individual to pass his secondary schooling with good marks and to get admitted in an Elitist Government Grammar School in the capital. Ete's family, cherishes his success, his parent's happiness has no bounds and they acknowledged his

achievement by arranging a grand party to celebrate his success. As a mark of appreciation, he was allowed to eat his meal along with his father. His mother would serve the food on a special table meant for the male members of the house and leave them alone because the male members are considered superior and might discuss important matters in which women are not allowed to interfere. This privilege would not be provided for the children, unless they have achieved the respect by their dint of hard work or until they attain adolescent age. His mother would not intervene or interfere in the matters that her husband and son discuss during their meal but she would listen to their interaction seated along with her other young ones in the place allotted for them and remain silent during their conversation.

Being brought up in such a traditional setting, Ete Kamba has his own concept about women's role and position in relation to his community and culture. Their traditional notions regarding women's position in society are embedded in his mind which makes him take women for granted, never understanding their potential. Male children from a young age are made to follow their father's footprints. So Ete couldn't accept women in an honourable position. He expects his life partner to be a subservient woman who would accept and obey his orders never complaining, as he was part of the educated modern elite he looked for an educated girl who is timid in nature. Since his childhood, he witnessed his mother as an obedient wife and he too expected that his wife should be like her.

His mother, to him, had been the epitome of womanhood, the type whose price was above the biblical rubies. The type who took pride not in herself but in her man. The type who would always obey her man, no matter what, even if he commanded her to walk through fire, the type that never questioned. He had thought all women were like that, and should be like that. (DY 37)

Ete meets his future better half when he and his family members attend their routine practice of visiting churches on Sundays and “staying three to four hours in the House of Lord was the least they could do to thank God for his mercies” (DY 15). They were invited by the neighbor Ekpeyong, for celebrating their daughter Arit’s successful completion of her beautician and hair-dressing course in Aba. Usually they do not celebrate the accomplishments of a girl child, so Ete and his father were not willing to attend the party. Ete’s father commented that the family of Ekpeyong “was well known for dramatising everything” (DY 20). During that thanks giving function in the church he met a thin little girl, Nko, her mother is a distant cousin to Arit’s mother. Ete’s family did not have any high opinion on Arit’s family because they used to attract “so much undeserved publicity to themselves” (DY 17). Ete and Arit’s brother Philip tried for their admission in the secondary school, but Philip was not able to pass the entrance exam. Ete’s family members think that it is unnecessary and ludicrous to boast over the success of a girl child.

Ete attends the party at Arit’s house, but he goes with the anticipation of meeting Nko. Though he knows well that his arrival will make Arit more proud, yet he goes for the sake of Nko. Her timid appearance captivates his young mind; he expects an educated and submissive person like Nko to be his future wife. During the party to his much amazement he got a chance to dance with Nko. When he interacted with her, he was amazed by the maturity of thoughts that prevailed in her words. Nko says about her parents, “No, they are our responsibility. They pay our fees deny themselves so many things that make life livable to see us go through this expensive education and when we’ve gone through it all, they are our responsibility.” (DY 28)

Ete is astounded by her thoughts and the responsibility she possesses towards her parents and he feels attracted to her. After talking to Nko for the first time in his life his opinion about women was shattered for he never had a high notion about women's intellectual capacity. Nko stood apart from the other girls whom he had met. Ete Kamba desires to marry Nko, “a very quiet and submissive woman, a good cook, a good listener, a good worker, a good mother with a good education to match. But her education must be a little less than his own, otherwise they would start talking on the same level” (DY 26). He decides to send a letter to her immediately.

Ete wanted to impress Nko through his letter, so he traveled all the way from his village to Calabar just to buy paper and matching envelopes. He is sure that Nko would reciprocate his love. When he does not receive any reply from her for weeks, he is disappointed. He is unable to share his disappointments even with his close friends, for he feared that they might tease him. He enquires numerous times to Effiong, his junior, whose duty is to collect letters, whether he has any letter for him. His friends Ikem and Akpan used to mock him whenever he enquired Effiong. After weeks, suddenly one day the little boy announced to him that he had received a letter. When he received the letter, the appearance of the letter itself disappointed him, it was a plain white cover, not the colorful romantic cover he was dreaming about. The contents in the letter did not sound romantic but expressed her love for him and wished him success for the forthcoming entrance examination to get admission in the university. Ete waited with confidence that Nko would reply with the same enthusiasm with which he wrote to her. In contrast, he feels perplexed and he realised that he was wrong in his estimation of Nko's character.

Ete cleared the entrance exam and won scholarship and got admission to the University of Calabar. His happiness knew no bounds, when he returned to inform his results to his parents, a grand party was arranged much to his surprise and he was stunned to see their relatives and friends who surrounded him to greet him on his success. Arit and her brother Philip came along with Nko to congratulate him on his success; he was shocked to the extreme when Nko informed him that a special thanks giving was arranged in the church on the forthcoming Sunday for celebrating his success by his parents. Ete interacts with Nko for a long time and he accompanies her to Arit's home. On the way, he suddenly lost his control and took Nko to the nearby half built house,

... unfinished, ... standing open to sky, led her through the path that ran by the side of the house, ...then suddenly he turned around, ... and Nko was able to see that it was distorted by another force- anger, thirst or maybe desire – she was not given time to find out. He bore on her; unceremoniously half pushed and dragged her towards the walls of this unfinished house, then right to a corner inside. He was determined. He had squared his shoulders ready to combat any protest, but none came. (DY 51)

Nko yielded to him, till the end, never showing any protest. His male ego is hurt by the way she reciprocated to his love and made him react savagely, on the other hand Nko who is portrayed as a matured, strong and sensible girl surrenders herself to his brutal treatment. She never protests to safeguard her virginity and appears to be a pathetic victim against his thirst for sexual pleasure. Then they both departed in whispers and he left her in Arit's house.

After he reached home, Ete thinks about his sexual encounter with Nko, the incident which gave him immense happiness a few moments back suddenly brought a sense of disappointment and distrust. He expected and believed that Nko would resist and protest against his progress, but she had completely surrendered herself to him. “He had previously imagined himself the first of all men, taking possession, hurting, conquering his bleeding partner whose blood would have washed them both almost like a living sacrifice... He would have liked to be that prehistoric man, that ancient lamp bearer lighting her way from innocence into maturity” (DY 61).

Ete doubts Nko’s virginity and thinks that her blood would be proof of his victory and ownership over her. So he runs to the half built house once again late at night and tries his anxious search for a trace of blood near the wall where they made love which symbolises his suspicions and worries. His attempts were so vain that he could not find any traces of blood on the walls or on the ground. According to Ete, Nko’s blood is the starting point of their relationship. The blood that she should have shed symbolises and would have proved that she is pure. His young and male chauvinistic mind strongly believes that it is crucial for Nko to be a virgin to meet the values of the perfect woman that Ete Kamba possesses in his mind.

Nko loved Ete right from their meeting and she had no doubts and had no restrictions in allowing him to take her, for she totally believed that she will be marrying Ete in future. Ete wasn’t sure whether he would continue relationship as he doubts her chastity. Florence Stratton rightly states the character of Ete as, “Ete’s norms are conventionally masculinity, his concern with superiority and dominance being particularly evident in his fantasies of sexual conquest” (128).



Maria Vidal Grau in her essay “Double-Think in Buchi Emecheta's *Double Yoke*” observes thus:

Ete Kamba's desire to marry a traditional at the same time an educated woman and his desperate effort to attain a university degree introduces a paradox: Education, specially a liberal university education, opens up new windows of opportunity and real alternatives to students, both men and women. Indeed, the whole purpose of any type of education is to create new options for the individual. However, through their education, university students are distanced from their parents' scripts for them and newly-acquired perceptions and attitudes force them to consider alternative ways into adulthood. This means that Ete Kamba's first burden is made even heavier by the second, making it difficult for him to maintain his equilibrium. (347)

Nko entered the University as a simple village girl who felt proud for being loved and protected by her family and Ete. “Nko had regarded herself lucky. She had a ready-made boyfriend; she had a mother who prayed for her constantly. Her father prayed for her too, but because he was always ill, somehow Nko thought he needed her prayers more than she did his. With all these advantages in her favour, Nko looked hopefully to the future.” (DY 95)

Ete is the first person from his place to receive university education. He undergoes inner turmoil that most of the village students feel when they get into a university. Ete is perplexed as he is unable to fit himself to the modern lifestyle at the university campus. He is continuously recalling Nko and waits for her arrival at the university. He straight

away questions her about her chastity. She is dumbfounded by his inquiry, but manages to question him, “Why ask that now? Is it so important?” (DY 56).

Nko’s sudden reaction and her back answering makes Ete shocked and they started arguing with each other, at one point he loses his control and starts to blame and call her as a prostitute for allowing him to have her without showing any protest, which is the breaking point for Nko, she says, “You called me a prostitute because of that, but you forgot that it takes two people at least to make any woman a prostitute, by your definition. You seem to be forgetting the men who slept with the woman. So if I am one, then what are you?” (DY 58).

Ete’s behaviour exposes the double standards of the society. Modern men would like their women to be educated but at the same time look forward to the fact that women should possess the qualities of a simple village girl. It shows Ete’s selfish attitude as he expects a slave instead of a wife. He is afraid the modernity that prevails in the university may change the submissive and obedient character of Nko. So, he is displeased with Nko pursuing her education in the same university.

Ete Kamba is taken aback when Nko questions his virginity. He has never thought that men could be prostitutes, and she has hurt his male ego, when Ete is unable to respond to her arguments, he starts to thrash her. He completely forgets about his education and begins to behave like an illiterate. He could not find any other way than this to make her submit herself and to bring her back to the right track, a strategy used by a rustic person to punish his wife. Outwardly he has shown his manliness by whipping Nko, but it clearly indicates his weak mindedness, unable to answer an audacious young lady who

questions his manliness. He has never acquainted a woman who would argue and back answer men. Ultimately he forcefully made Nko to agree to his sexual thirst once again. When he calms down Nko consoles him and says that she yielded to him without protesting because she did not want to disappoint him on his special day and destroy his happiness. She also informs him that she truly loves him and that is the exclusive reason for allowing him to have her. On the other hand, his violent attitude towards Nko is to make her understand that he is superior to her and she needs to be submissive to him.

Ete is able to understand the reality that Nko is not like his mother, a symbol of an ideal and traditional woman. He is also shocked to hear the words of Nko when she reveals that it is his mother who has taken all the pains to arrange for church thanks giving celebrations. He couldn't believe that his mother had taken steps to arrange a party for him. His traditional mindset restricted him from understanding women, as he is unable to break free from his traditional conventions – “He would have to go out, to face the new woman, try to understand her and may be get a partner and friend for himself” (DY 37). His innate desire is that he wanted to change Nko according to his liking and make her a subservient wife like his mother. He considers her as an object or a commodity not as a living being filled with feelings.

Reverend Professor Elder Ikot is a man of religion who often conducts meetings on ‘Religious Revival’ (DY 37); he is respected by students and staff in the University for his Spirituality and integrity. General belief that prevails is that God spoke through him and he had the ability to provoke people through his sermon. Ete Kamba decides to attend one such Religious Revival meeting. Initially Ete did not have much belief in such meetings and criticized it, but when he arrived at the meeting, he was dumbstruck by the

crowd waiting there. Professor Ikot initiated preaching and modulated his tone of speech appropriately and soon captured the attention of the entire crowd. Ete and his friends started to forget their real self and began to chant according to the instructions of Professor Ikot. Ete has been “looking forward to his university life, but since moving into campus, he could not push Nko out of his mind. He tried very hard to do this, but he could not” (DY 76).

Ete decides to discuss his problem with the Reverend Professor Elder Ikot. It was not easy to meet the Professor, so he fixes an appointment and after waiting for hours he meets Professor Ikot who is already accompanied by Dr. Mrs. Edet. She is an assistant and helper of the Professor. When Ete starts narrating his problem, Professor Ikot, seems to be careless. Ete is shocked when he begins to question,

You mean his little girl Nko? You mean Nko had allowed you to sleep with her; that innocent looking girl? Oh these girls, these girls... Here he burst into a rather fitful laughter ... Ete Kamba did not know what he wanted the Elder's language to be like, but it was not anything like this. One thing he did know, this was not the sound he expected from the spiritual man of God. (DY 88-89)

Professor Ikot instead of guiding Ete and helping him to come out of his problem, he begins to mock Ete and at last strictly advises him to stop thinking about Nko because she is a gifted girl who is worthy of a far better husband than Ete Kamba. Ete is totally taken aback by Professor Ikot, he appears to be completely alien to his earlier presence at the spiritual programme. Ete comes to a conclusion that he is not a man of nobility as he is believed to be, he seems to be a person who is far below the standards of an ordinary man. Ete is not happy with the reaction and Ikot's advice to him. He has never expected

such a reply from an elderly person like him, Ete soon realised that the Professor is different from his public image, and Ete came to a conclusion that he had committed a mistake by believing him.

On the other hand, Nko is a victim of her family situation. Her father who is bedridden is not in a position to provide any moral or financial support to their family, so as the eldest daughter and a responsible person she is trapped by the clutches of economic necessity, and she couldn't expect Ete to help their family monetarily. Nko's unfortunate economic conditions leave her with no alternative and her self-esteem does not permit her to depend upon Ete Kamba for monetary support. She strictly believed, "Theirs was going to be a good marriage, a marriage in which the two of them would complement each other." (DY 92). Her problem arises when she desires to acquire professional success as well as to become an obedient wife. Nko voices her desire to her mother, "Oh mother, I want to have both worlds, I want to be an academician and I want to be a quiet nice and obedient wife, the type you all want me to be. I want the two mother" (DY 94). Nko desires to embrace both modernity and tradition. She wants to be a modern educated successful woman as well as a traditional wife and mother. After patiently listening to her loving daughter Nko, her mother feels that modernity instead of bringing ease and comfort, actually burdens women with a double yoke of professional and academic responsibilities.

... sometimes I think you modern girls are not so lucky ... Now you have this new thing, this mad education for women and yet still, you want to have everything we had ... it is going to be difficult ... you may call us ignorant, but we were happy

and contented in our ignorance ... you know what you are under, you are under a double yoke. So you need a stronger shoulder with which to carry it. (DY 94)

Women belonging to her mother's generation were bound by traditional customs and they remained submissive to their husbands and never longed for independence unlike the present generation youth. They preferred being ignorant and accepted the traditional subservient roles happily. Nko's mother understands Nko's situation and advises her daughter that it would be difficult for youngsters like her to conquer both the worlds, because of modern education women have acquired profound knowledge. So automatically they start questioning and prefer to be independent, they have to play two roles at a time, they have to take care of their family and pursue their profession. Nko had to shoulder her family responsibilities, she innately believes, "Nko looked hopefully to the future. She knew she would have to pay the school fees of her two younger brothers, but that was something Ete Kamba would understand. An educated girl these days was not expected just to be a financial asset to her husband, but had to be so to her family as well" (DY 95).

So Nko's dream of being an obedient wife to Ete Kamba and bearing a number of children in future is totally a contrast to her dream of becoming an economically independent woman. Nko's mother was taught to be a submissive wife and was taught to carry out petty trade to support the family financially. Modern education has changed the outlook of women and therefore they find themselves fascinated by the financial independence they would gain by being educated.

*Double Yoke* is narrated from Ete's perspective. He explains his family background, his expectations and his dreams, his relationship with Nko and his disappointments.

His narration is male oriented, he criticises the characters and judges them from his personal paradigm which is basically patriarchal in nature. He is not in a position to understand Nko's condition because of the patriarchal notions embedded in his psyche.

What this story reveals is that in the 'ideal Nigeria' of Ete's imagination the status quo of male domination would be perpetuated. For Ete produces a conventional male narrative. But the same story is also told by the novel's narrator from Nko's perspective. Counter-discursive in its strategies, this version of the story displays some of the characteristics of women's writing. Repeatedly interrupting Ete's story, the narrator subverts the codes of the conventional male narrative and engages the text of the novel's would-be male author in a dialogue on gender.

(Stratton 128)

The novelist recurrently interrupts Ete's narrative from the male perspective to the feminine version by presenting Nko's point of view. Nko is slightly afraid to reveal the secret that her enrollment in the university happened only with the help of Professor Ikot. When Ete comes to know about it he is quite astonished and feels that it is quite unnatural. At the end of his meeting with Professor Ikot, as if engulfed by some magical power he knelt down and prayed for a successful and prosperous future for Nko. He is warned by Professor Ikot that she is a girl born to be married to a man of higher status; Professor Ikot says, "She is made for the Commissioner or the Professorial class; you know those on salary level sixteen and over. You'll be lucky to get level seven when you finish here" (DY 91). He understands that if he has to complete his degree successfully he should remain cordial with Professor Ikot. So, he decided to obey the orders of the Professor and came out of the room much wiser.

Nko is not ready to discuss her family or love matters with her roommates in the university. Ete is first fascinated by her simplicity and her uncomplicated manners, which is quite identical to his traditional mother. He appreciated the way she tied her scarf around her head because it gives her a childlike appearance almost similar to a nun. When all the roommates dress according to the current trend, Nko dresses according to Ete's liking. Ete wishes Nko to be the embodiment of virtue. He likes her to be dressed like a nun which clearly indicates his innate yearning to place Nko as a personification of the perfect woman. Esther, Nko's roommate angrily shouts: "Can't you see that men will always put us where they want us to be? I was waiting for you to say that. Pooh, you look innocent indeed, almost like the Virgin Mary. So you want to be a nun eh? Then remain so, well wrapped in veils and cotton wool, completely unspoilt, simply for him" (DY 100).

Nko's roommates believed that it is the natural tendency of men to treat women as a slave. Mrs. Nwaizu, a married woman and a fellow student of the University is a roommate of Nko. She is the mother of four children who has enrolled for her higher studies after working as a teacher for some years; she is addressed by her roommates as 'Madam' in order to show their respect. She is quite experienced as she is older than all the girls. She explains that women have no rights to neither crave for their rights nor fight for their independence if they do so they term those women as feminist and feminism is considered as a derogatory word in Nigerian society. Mrs. Nwaizu's states: "Here feminism means everything the society says is bad in women. Independence, outspokenness, immorality, all the ills you can think of. So even the educated ones who are classically feminist and liberated in their attitudes and behaviour will come round and say to you 'but I am gentle and not the pushful type.'" (DY 104). Though women wished for gender equality they feared



offending the social norms. Though some women were able to talk about feminism because of their educational background, yet they adhered to the practices that conventionally upheld the acknowledged representation of women.

Dr. Mrs. Edet is trapped between modernity and religion. She is a Professor teaching Religion in the Department of Humanities and is also an assistant to Professor Ikot and she is known for her spirituality. She seems to be trapped between her position as an academician and desire to become the traditional woman idealized by their society. Nko's roommate, Esther rightly points out that Mrs Edet takes more pride in introducing herself as "Mrs." rather than as "Dr". The protagonist Ete comments on the appearance of Mrs. Edet as: "Sister. Dr. Mrs. Edet giggled like a silly school girl, her hand covering her mouth, a childish gesture which was wasted on her rather tall man-like figure. Her tall skinny near flat chested figure looped in the dark shadow by the dining hall door like a giraffe hunting for fruits from the top of a tree. (DY 78).

Dr. Edet tries to speak in a slow, kind and innocent manner and presents herself like a conservative woman makes her an object of ridicule among the students. Her titles that she puts before her name signifies her instinctive desire to emphasize each and every characteristic of her life, demonstrating all her position as an academician, spirituality and her identity as a wife. Nko too notices that Mrs. Edet takes much effort to assert her femininity, "and in a desperate effort to be feminine, she had to speak slowly deliberately, producing sounds like those made by pantomime men who act as women" (DY 107). Though Dr. Edet is economically empowered and holds a respectable position as an academician yet she tries to be conservative by following the stereotypical role of womanhood ascertained by the patriarchal society.

There is an unexpected twist in the life of Nko's when she goes to meet Dr. Mrs. Edet to receive her project essay. Dr. Edet shouts at Nko for her English is too weak, Professor Ikot straight away assures her that he will be her coordinator and will help her in her studies. Dr. Edet flatly rejects Professor Ikot's offer to supervise Nko by saying. "That will be ethically wrong. What about those students, brilliant ones who had been waiting for you to be their supervisor for these three years? A man of your standing should be supervising postgraduate students and you know that many students in this department would give their right hand for you to have a look at their work. (DY 62)

Mrs. Edet rebukes him by saying that it would be inappropriate on his part to favour a woman who has just entered the university while hundreds of final year students are waiting for his supervision. She is jealous that Professor Ikot is showering undue consideration on Nko. She observes her dressing and scolds Nko for not covering her head. Mrs. Edet could not accept the fact that Professor Ikot's cares for the little village girl. She is sure that the Professor was attracted by Nko's appearance. Her anger has no bounds that she starts finding more fault with Nko. Nko comes out of her room crying and she was instructed by Professor Ikot that she should meet him on all Tuesday and Thursday at eight o' clock in the night. Though she could partially understand his intentions for she is not such an immature girl. Her problem is evident when Professor Ikot offers to supervise her:

Was such a degree worth losing her good name, and may be Ete? But she did not want to lose either. Then what was left for her to do when people were now telling her that she could not have both? She must either have her degree and be a bad, loose, feminist, shameless, career woman, who would have to fight men all her

life; or do without her degree, and be a good loving wife and Christian woman to Ete Kamba and meanwhile reduce her family and herself to being beggars at Ete's table. (DY 135)

Mrs. Edet had just wished to reproach Nko in front of the Professor, but it turned out to be what she had never expected. Nko is trapped by the crafty Professor Ikot. Nko visits the Professor as per his instructions. During one such meeting she is noticed by Akpan. When Akpan informs about Nok's visit to meet Professor Ikot. Ete became so violent that he goes to the extreme of tearing the photograph that they had taken when they went for a trip to Oron to see the Cross River State Museum.

Professor Ikot plans well and cunningly execute it. He asked Nko whether she could accompany them to Kwa falls. His real intention is vile, but he hides it and tells that his wife and children will accompany them. Believing his words, she goes along with him, it is only after they have started, she comes to know that his wife has gone to her parent's home a few days back and she is not at home. She has accepted to the trip hoping that his wife and children would come along, now she could not deny because she can't displease him.

Eventually she understands that she is his prey now. She is afraid of Ete's reaction if he comes to know about her trip with Professor Ikot, and now she is worried about safeguarding herself from him. Professor Ikot reveals Ete's confession about their private affairs. Nko is shocked to the extreme. She couldn't believe her own ears, she is broken and hurt, and all her hope that she has understood Ete fully has been shaken now. She never thought that Ete would reveal their secret to a third person like Professor Ikot. She realises that Ete Kamba will not protect her in her life as she had dreamt, it is the education and

career that she is going to have in future will guard her and her family. Her intelligence clearly states that this trip has been shrewdly planned by the Professor and is essentially a trick to take advantage of her situation. When Nko is apparent that she has no other options left behind, other than to capitulate herself to him and to let him have his way, she gives in to his wishes.

When they came back to the campus Nko firmly stated to the Professor, “I want a First Class honours degree. I don’t care how you do it, I want First Class honours.” (DY 140). Professor finds a transformation in the attitude and behaviour of Nko, “This was the type of determination Professor Ikot had never seen on the face of any woman, to say nothing of a woman so young. For a moment his face betrayed fear; Nko saw it, and how she loved that fear.” (DY 141)

The oppression faced by women in the society is evident through the sexual exploiting of Nko by Professor Ikot. Nko is no longer a feeble woman but a strong-minded individual who is determined to get what she needs. She is ready to go to the extent of blackmailing him if he doesn't help her to get a First Class honours degree. The choice of demanding a first class honours degree in exchange for her submission to his sexual wishes would not be an appropriate decision to the problem of sexual misuse of women in the academic field. Nko stands contrary to the stereotypical representation of women accepting their victimization as she uses her sexuality to achieve her goals. In an interview, Emecheta explains Nko’s act in the following words:

So, in *Double Yoke* when people say she shouldn’t have had sex with the professor, they don’t understand that is the only way she could survive. In the end it did

disturb her because she met other women and realized that it was stupid hiding her feelings in the first place anyway. She should have discussed them—that would have given her more strength. (Bryce 35)

After the excruciating incident at the Kwa Falls with Professor Ikot, Nko undergoes a drastic change in attitude. She has lost trust in Ete because he has discussed their relationship with Professor Ikot. She is no more the timid village girl who is totally dependent on Ete. When she happens to meet Ete, she does not take pains to explain anything about the misfortune that has happened to her; she informs him that their relationship stands broken. Ete is shocked and unable to regain his senses for a while.

Later Ete realises that Nko's strange behaviour is because Professor Ikot has molested her. Ete and his friends decide to teach a lesson to Professor Ikot. Ete and his friends went to Professor Ikot's room and beat him until he started bleeding all over. Nko was shocked to see the Professor's condition and she stops Ete and his friends from beating him. Ete's anger turns towards Nko and calls her a whore for without her consent the Professor wouldn't have seduced her. Nko in turn replies that, "I am not asking you to understand. But if I am a whore, you two made me one" (DY 150).

Nko returns to her room late night after the shocking episode, she is questioned by Mrs. Nwaizu, because it might bring bad name for all who stay with Nko. Nko entered the room believing that all of them might have slept, to her surprise they all were awake, and she felt broken and started to cry. She confesses everything that happened between the Professor, Ete and herself. Mrs. Nwaizu consoles Nko, by saying that most of the women students undergo similar plight because of the Professor Ikot who is aged enough

to be a fatherly figure, he tries to exploit young women by making them surrender to his desires, “We all want to work for our papers, but what we do, when men old enough to be our fathers come around to tell us that we can’t get it unless we have their lousy ‘tutorials?’” (DY 154). Julia, her roommate bursts out saying that, “No, Don’t. Must you marry him anyway? Must you marry at all if you don’t particularly want to? Get a good degree, by working hard for it. It is easier to get a good degree using one’s brain power than bottom power.” (DY 155)

Women are the most victimized by sexist oppression. As with other forms of group oppression, sexism is perpetuated by institutional and social structures; by the individuals who dominate, exploit, or oppress; and by the victims themselves who are socialized to behave in ways that make them act with complicity with the status quo. Male supremacist ideology encourages women to believe we are valueless and obtain value only by retaining to or bonding with men. We are taught that our relationships with one another diminish rather than enrich our experience. We are taught that women are “natural” enemies, that solidarity will never exist between us because we cannot, should not, and do not bond with one another ... We must learn to live and work in solidarity. We must learn the true meaning and value of Sisterhood.

(Hooks 43)

Mrs. Nwaizu asks Nko to inform Ete, she says that she has lost hope in him as she feels that Professor Ikot considered her to be vulnerable because Ete disclosed their intimacy to the Professor. Mrs. Nwaizu advised her to stay in their room until the rumours subsided, if Nko’s reputation is at stake she might be asked to discontinue her education, if there is no such danger she could continue with her work. Nko feels, “She now knew

that she had been stupid. She ought to have told her friends” (DY 154). There is always a spirit of sisterhood that exists within the community and if Nko had revealed her predicament they would have guided and protected her.

Ete and his friends expected that the Professor would regret and change his behaviour. Professor Ikot misrepresents the incident in a different perspective, such that he is regarded as a heroic person. “The governor of the State talked about the security on campus, and apologized to all the Calabar people and to the Reverend Professor” (DY 158). This incident clearly states that people in power will manipulate situations to their advantage. Though most of them knew the truth they weren’t courageous to rebel against his atrocities.

In the due course, Nko becomes pregnant with Professor Ikot’s child and decides to keep it, she states to Mrs. Nwaizu: “I am even going to have the beast’s baby. And I am not going to abort or anything. It should arrive during the next long vacation. My people will be shocked, but they will forgive me. One thing they are not going to hear from me is the name of its father. I am going to make it clear that it is not Ete’s child” (DY 159).

Nko neither expects protection from her family members nor from Ete Kamba. She has decided to give birth to the child and is aware of the difficulty of being a single mother. She considers being a single mother to be a sort of independence. Ete could not accept that she has become independent and that she never cares for him anymore. Though he is filled with her thoughts, “He avoided her, and she seemed to have acquired a kind of independence.” (DY 160).

Miss Bulewao firmly believes that creative writing could be used as a tool to bring out the hidden reality. As an educator, Miss Bulewao encourages transformation,

because she wishes that her students would use creative writing as a counteractive medium to fight against social injustice. Miss Bulewao entered the classroom and motivated her students to represent their insight from their own social experiences and encouraged them to write about the mishaps of the society.

Miss. Bulewao gave a creative writing task for the students, while all the other students wrote some imaginary story for the assignment, Ete wrote his own story. Miss Bulewao after reading, she straight away questions him, “Why don’t you ask your girl to marry you and why don’t you talk to her?” (DY 160). Ete becomes furious at her question, he feels like “throwing a chair at her” (DY 160). He controlled himself and replied that he would definitely not do it. She, then, touches his ego, by asking if he was a virgin when he had sex with Nko for the first time. This deeply hurt his feelings and he feels like “getting up and walking out of that office” (DY 161). He is unable to answer her questions. Miss Bulewao advices Ete thus,

The average modern Nigerian woman is almost priceless. Her family comes first. She works hard, and if she is well educated like Nko she will be a good companion as well ... Ete Kamba the question is-are you strong enough to be a modern African man? And Nko is already a modern African lady, but you are still lagging ... oh, so far, far behind. And to think... you still love her... where will you find a village girl that will replace her. (DY 161-162)

Miss. Bulewao tries to bring the young lovers together. Ete could not tolerate her continuous speech, “wanting very much to tell this lady to mind her own business” (DY 161). Ete says that Nko is pregnant with Professor Ikot’s child and that is stopping him from



marrying her. Miss Bulewao defends Nko and says that if he had an adulterous relationship and Nko had refused to marry him. Ete gets angry and answers malevolently, “Madam, you seem to be forgetting that I am a man. I can do what I like. A man can raise his own bastard, women are not allowed to do that” (DY 162). Ete’s personality is shaped by the traditional beliefs and customs and so he is unable to adapt himself to the rapidly changing society. Miss. Bulewao says, “Are you strong enough to be a modern African man? Nko is already a modern African lady, but you are still lagging... oh, so far, far behind” (DY162).

After their conversation, Ete Kamba decides to concentrate on his academics and avoids his friends. Ete’s conventional thinking and his inability to accept Nko results in psychological trauma. University education usually provides an individual a broader outlook, but he is unable to cope with modernity and his traditional beliefs. Miss Bulewao comes to handle her hour and asks for Ete Kamba, she is informed that Ete is absent as he has accompanied his girlfriend to their native village. This incident indicated that Ete has accepted Nko with her flaws. When Bulewao was informed by Ete’s friends that he has accompanied Nko as her father died suddenly, she is quite satisfied that her words have brought a change in him. She informs Ete’s friends, “It is nice to know that many of you are bearing your double burdens or yokes or whatever heroically” (DY 163).

*Double Yoke* was written after Emecheta’s return to Nigeria, her native country. Emecheta was no longer an ordinary timid young lady who left Nigeria, she came back as an established novelist. She is totally frustrated and surprised to notice that even after several years of independence; her country has not developed like other countries. She taught creative writing at Calabar University and noticed some disgusting happenings in the

university campus, such as exploitation of women students by the academic supervisors and the existence of gender inequity. She merges both the themes together in this novel; she depicts the embarrassment faced by the women of Igbo society and their predicament through her novels.

Buchi Emecheta in her creative writing reflected her personal experiences which helped her to fight against sexism, racism and class prejudice. Thus, Miss Bulewao is a representation of Emecheta's life. Buchi Emecheta after residing several years abroad, decided to return to Nigeria as she wished to transform her society through her writing career. Characterization of Miss Bulewao is a right indication that there are certain unique personalities who act as torchbearers to bring about a transformation in the society. Miss Bulewao rectifies the patriarchal attitude of Ete Kamba and makes him realise his innate love for Nko. She made Ete realise, "Only men with a large heart can love and understand. That does not make them weak. It makes them great" (DY 162). While many women struggle to make a choice between traditional and modern life, she is able to showcase herself as an exceptional character balancing herself rightly between their native traditions and fits herself to the challenging situations of modern society. It is the clarity of thought that helps her to be a perfect combination of traditional culture and modernity. She has the strength and potency to guide to choose the right path. She also possesses the courage to question the norms set up by the patriarchal society and to voice against gender inequality.

Identity crisis arises when an individual is not able to fit himself in the existing society. If a person is able to maintain balance between these two cultures then they would reap the benefits of both the cultures. Nko initially desired to obtain a university

degree and also to be a traditional housewife. She is ready to bear the double yoke and prepares herself for it. Ete Kamba is unable to get rid of his traditional attitude; he could not adapt himself to the modern outlook of life. There is a slight change in his firm decisions only at the end of the novel, when he accompanies her for her father's burial. The primary reason behind Ete's dilemma is because of their inherent affinity towards their native culture and traditional upbringing. Nko is able to adapt and transform herself because she has undergone horrendous exploitation by Professor Ikot. She tolerates all the sufferings and transforms herself as the new woman.

The fundamental difference between Ete's handling of his burdens and Nko's handling of hers is that, while the former carries his yoke in the traditional, male-contrived value system, Nko had learned that in order to survive she must carry her double-yoke on her own terms, refuting entirely all male-dictated constraints that society pretends to impose on her. (Grau 347)

Nko has acquired strength to face the challenges mainly because of her education which strengthens and provides courage to revolt against the standards set by the society. The societal setup is based on a system of beliefs and assumptions which is termed as ideology. Nigerian society is based on patriarchal culture which gives more importance to men and degrades women. Nko shatters the long-established ideology and emerges successfully. "The social construction of gender takes place through the working of ideology. Ideology is that system of beliefs and assumptions – unconscious, unexamined, invisible - which represents the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence." (Green and Kahn 61)

Ete tries to break free from the traditional orthodox ideas and promotes gender equality. The transformation in Ete indicates the social change in the Nigerian society during the post-colonial period. Ete expects a never questioning obedient woman with a good education as his wife. His adherence to traditional patriarchal mores is responsible for his narrow-minded perceptions of women. He struggles to redefine himself according to the modern social norms that demands gender equity. He has observed his mother being submissive and the supremacy of his father. She takes care of her family financially by contributing the money she receives for working in the fields. He has seen his father physically hurting her, but she never stepped away from the sphere of patriarchal order which tradition has defined. Ete considers his mother to be the ultimate woman and he adores his mother for her flexible nature. For the men raised in the cocoon of patriarchy, it becomes impossible to accept the new woman. Ete Kamba breaks the male stereotype set by the patriarchal society as he stands by Nko in her time of need.

Ete is not confined in a stereotypically reduced characterization of manhood. His is a realistic portrayal, for like Nko, he changes in response to his social circumstances. Miss Bulewao, 'the most talked about female writers in Nigeria' is the catalyst in bringing about the transformation. The portrayal thus serves as a reminder to women writers that men, too, face problems of adjustment in a rapidly changing society that they too, as Ms. Bulewao indicates, labour under a double yoke. (Stratton 131)

Nko, once a timid girl during the initial stages of the novel turned out to be a rebellious character ready to face any struggle. Nko was brazen enough to tell Professor Ikot, "I'll tell you sir that most girls here come to read for their degrees. If they become

what you think, which is ‘prostitutes, Nigerian style’, it is because people like you made them so.” (DY 141). She chooses to have her child and also complete her graduation without the help of a man. Nko’s determination to beget the child has provided her an almost heroic status, as she “... seemed to have acquired a kind of independence” (DY 160).

The theme of *Double Yoke* is women subjugation and their emancipation through their education. The novelist emphasizes that women are suppressed to the core, and they need to free themselves from patriarchal domination. Nko lives in the post-colonial period and struggles to balance between her modern education and the duties ascertained by her culture. She has to manage her education and career while holding on to her tradition. Nigerian women who have undergone untold suffering in their tribal society could manage any challenge and could prove themselves successful in their personal and professional spheres. Gender discrimination in African society is highlighted by Miss Bulewao thus:

It's nice to know that many of you are bearing your double burdens or yokes or whatever heroically. The community burden of going home with the person we care for to bury her dead, and yet the burden of individualism - that of knowing that we are happier in somebody's company, however tainted we may think he or she is. Women do have to make these decisions too you know. (DY 163)

The novel is set in 1980' Nigeria illustrates that even the professionally established women tried to conduct their lives according to the set patterns of Nigerian culture. Emecheta through her heroine's voices the need for women's emancipation and touches upon the theme of societal corruption as the young women from economically weaker

section of society have to face various kinds of exploitation in their struggle to gain a university education which would guarantee a good professional career. Emecheta also hits her sword at the imperfection and immorality that prevails in the academic field.

Reverend Ikot, the most respected religious leader, who has to take up the responsibility of safeguarding the students, is filled with imperfection. He threatens and makes his girl students to satisfy his sexual desires. He demands when he hears the words of Ete that they had a relationship with each other, “Nko is from my part. She is a true Efik from Duke Town,... What do you want a graduate wife for?”(DY 90). He has a mentality to make others submissive and passive before him. He plays his trick and makes Nko fall victim to his evil intentions. She accepts to his sexual demands without any refusal because she would not get her graduation if she disobeys and refuses to his desires. Marie Umeh states her views against sexual bargain for academic gain thus, “Moral laxity need not be equated with the new African women. Ironically, Emecheta in her plot does not ploy female liberation in Africa. Instead she strengths the belief of the conservative Nigerians who fear that western education leads women to all sorts of corruption.” (167)

Women are subjugated and they are in need to surrender to male domination if they need to achieve their goals in their life. The protagonist surrenders herself to the wishes of Professor Ikot for the first-class honours' degree. Her family background makes her to yield to the desires of these unethical men. Professor Ikot never thinks about his position or his duty to take care of Nko as her guardian. Though Nko is a victim of rape she frees herself from the “double yoke” by refusing to marry the Professor.

Although Nko is victimized by two men, she ultimately rejects the role of victim...She has not set out to win a first-class honors degree by distributing sexual favors, but when the choice is made for her by Ikot, she decides to take full advantage of a bad situation. Fully aware of the conflicting demands made on her by the old and new ways of African life, she accepts her double burden with grace and dignity. (Fishburn 152)

Ete Kamba changes his male chauvinism in the due course of time. He was puzzled as he was unable to comprehend the principles of the new woman of Nigeria. "But now he knew that she knew many, many things. Could he cope with a woman like that?"(DY 63). The novelist highlights the necessity for change in attitude of women and men.

Within such a 'modern' society, persons must learn to accept multiple responsibilities and develop a flexibility of mind as an individual which will bring about the acceptance of previously unacceptable conditions. In short, for the sake of their own happiness and those around them they must be prepared to become 'new', 'modern' African men and women. This is basically the message of Double Yoke. (Grau 346)

Emecheta has portrayed Ete in a positive note as he changes from an ostentatious individual to a responsible person who is willing to share the burden of the double yoke which Nko is struggling to carry. Though Nko is slightly shattered by the sexual abuse initially she combines conventional feminine roles with academic success. "Oh, blast it all. She was going to have both. She was going to manoeuvre these men to give her both. They thought that they could always call the tune and women like her must dance to it. With her, they were going to be wrong" (DY 135).

Female bonding, the relationship between mother and daughter and her friends are a great source of comfort to Nko. “Nko is positioned to transform the cultural clash which results in a double yoke for African women into a progressive synthesis of the best each culture has to offer” (Hawley 134). Nko turns out to be a perfect example she stands against the turbulent situations that she faces in her life. Nko has the will power to earn a degree to help her family members. “Refusing to play the role of the helpless victim, she boldly demands from him the highest grade for her work, thereby attempting to dismantle the power structure” (Ogunyemi, *African Wo/Man* 263).

The psychological transformation in Ete and Nko is the quintessence of the novel *Double Yoke*. The entire novel represents the evolution of Nigerian society. It could be imagined that as Ete has transformed his male chauvinistic outlook, Nko would be leading a happy life in future; she would be an educated person with a professional career and a happy contented family life; she will have a glowing future where all her dreams would come true.