

Being a wife in Ifeka's *Onye loro mkpuru udara* and Nwaozuzu's *Nke m ji ka*: A comparative literary analysis

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Abstract

*This paper is an attempt to discover the differences and similarities between the wives in the selected literary drama works. It tries to find out how or whether the power of women in public and private lives grow stronger in the modern times. A wife is believed not to be whole without the husband and this makes the wife in question undergo a lot of things so as to always maintain the title 'wife'. At most times, her consistent encounters and issues with her husband, her pierced position in the marriage, her duties and responsibilities, societal expectations or hidden resentments are all attributors to what becomes of her. This paper espouses comparative theory as its theoretical framework, in a qualitative research. Qualitative comparative analysis is employed. In view of the above, an analysis of the women termed 'wives' in the texts *Onye Loro Mkpuru Udara (Ifeka)* and *Nke M Ji Ka (Nwaozuzu)* in this paper to ascertain their predicaments and to unravel the mystery of becoming a wife despite all odds.*

Keywords: *wife, woman, literature, comparative analysis, drama*

Introduction

Literature has an evaluative as well as descriptive functions, in such a way that its proper usage has become a matter of contention. (Abrams 2005). It is the better part of life. To this it seems inevitably necessary to add, provided life is the better part of literature. Similarly, Onyeagba opines that; Igbo literature is not all

about telling stories of animals and spirits. It deals with the totality of man's experience and struggles with his environment and even man's hopeless and helpless surrender, to forces, which he could not control. Modern critical movements, aiming to correct what are seen as historical injustices, stress the strong but covert role played by gender, race, and class in establishing what has, in various eras, been accounted as literature or in forming the ostensibly timeless criteria of great and canonical literature. The artists' interest in the molding of events into artistically significant forms and the critics' views about the aesthetic relation between form, experience and meaning, suggest a sense of the literary importance of the formal mode of being a literary genre. In particular, it not only provides for the given work a basis of its identity and uniqueness, but it also can be an expression of the socio-cultural assumptions of the community in which the creative object, that is, the drama exists. In this case, the form of the given work then becomes a mode, an index reflecting the artist's sensibility, his creative aspirations, as well as the system of social values within which he operates.

The family as a social stratification is and can never be complete without the wife. A husband/man no matter how physically strong, is incomplete in so many areas of his life without his wife. Her absence is highly and usually felt notwithstanding her nature and looks. She undergoes a lot to earn all these and still be significant. In so many cases, she suffers directly or indirectly from her benefactors because she decides to add flavor to her own life. Whenever she does such in some cases, it becomes unacceptable because it would deprive her of her responsibility as a wife. Being a wife therefore is a task which does not just end as being married to a husband. Chiezugo and Ugochi's lives as wives in *Onye loro mkpuru udara* and *Nke m ji ka* respectively, will be

comparatively looked into to arrive at strong and lasting conclusion, that it requires a lot to maintain the uxorial, 'wife'. This paper will review some of the issues surrounding what it really takes to be a wife and successfully standing out despite all odds, by doing a comparative analysis of two female characters in two Igbo selected texts.

Synopsis of *Onye loro mkpuru udara*

This is an Igbo drama from an Igbo writer (Ifeka). The story revolves around Chiezugo, wife of Emetaa. Emetaa is a wealthy man from Amaedo who later marries Chiezugo, daughter of Anyadike and Oyeoma. He married her while she was still in secondary school. Both, have five children-four boys and a girl after which Chiezugo vows never to conceive again. In Okide's family, Emetaa is the only one whose name is heard in terms of being wealthy. This made him parade himself as a *god* in his father's house. His parents respect him very well. Mr. Anyadike and his wife Oyeoma are not satisfied with the marriage existing between their daughter and her husband. Every day, they receive complains and reports of the way their son in law maltreats their daughter. This gives them great concern but they keep believing God that their daughter's children will grow up someday to wipe their mother's tears. Emetaa's lifestyle is filled with wickedness and I don't care attitude which made Chiezugo to dislike him and not like him the way it should be but this never made her forsake her children. She is always of the opinion that she and her children must stand on their feet despite the maltreatment they get from Emetaa and his family. The death of Chiezugo's father makes her stronger at heart. She encourages herself and determines to ignore her husband totally and take very good care of her children no matter what it takes. She considers her marriage as one that is manipulated because of the way her sister- in-law pushes her

husband (Emetaa) about. Adanne, tells her husband who to give money and who not to give, when to give it and when not to give it. The same sister in law makes life miserable for Chiezugo's children by making them slaves in their own father's house. The repercussion of her evil behavior did not waste time before descending on her, as her own children became the source of her doom in her husband's house which made her husband to send her packing. She is being rejected by her children and her husband people even while still alive. Chiezugo later gets a lift and promotion that surprised everyone. Her children are indeed blessings to her. Adanne and Emetaa are left with nothing but regrets as they cannot undo the evil that they had already done.

Synopsis of *Nke m ji ka*

This is an Igbo play written by G.I. Nwozuzu. It is a story about the king of Umueleme village whose name is Eze Onyekwere. He marries Lolo Ugochi as his first wife and later marries Achalu as his second wife. Eze Onyekwere is a very strict person who is rigid and intolerant. He believes in forcefully getting whatever he desires. Before marrying his second wife, Ugochi who is his first wife bore only female children for him. The sight of his daughters irritates him. He is a typical Igbo man who believes that the male children worth more than gold. This always affects his relationship with his first wife. At the slightest provocation, he beats her and her daughters. The emergence of the white people who brought Christianity did not change his attitude for good, instead it worsens the situation. He accuses his wife, Ugochi of infidelity because she attends Church of Christ and hardly stays at home for him. These, with the persuading of his elder sister, Ogonna who makes him to marry a second wife who will give him male children and possibly be there for him whenever he wants. It didn't stop at that, when Ugochi got pregnant for her husband, it was hell for her to the

extent that she seeks solace in the church; a place which is void of violence and torture. The second wife gave birth to a girl child. This breaks the king's heart. Meanwhile, Ugochi the first wife after giving birth to twin boys was denied access to her children as they were thrown in the evil forest because they were regarded as abomination. In the end, the church brings them back from the forest and takes care of them with the help of their mother and other members of the church without the knowledge of the king.

Method

Igbo written literature encompasses the three genres of literature which are; novel, drama and poetry, and these genres cover various themes in the society. Amongst all, Ifeka's *Onye loro mkpuru udara* and Nwozuzu's *Nke m ji ka* were purposively selected for this study. They were selected on the basis of the theme of the drama texts which is being a wife in the family. Drama was selected due to the fact that, for performative reasons, drama captures and reflects real life more than the novel or poetry. Through acting, the characters come alive and re-enact reality and our social condition in a way that leaves no one in doubt. Two drama texts were selected for this study because, the drama texts are found sufficient to extract adequate data for analysis. Secondly, since the study is a comparative one, there is every compelling reason to include two texts.

Data and analysis

In this section, data from the drama texts will present the wives and they will be compared in the following order: consistent encounters/issues with their husbands, their position in the marriage, their duties and responsibilities, societal expectations or hidden resentments and factors that militated the survival of the wives. Consistent encounters/issues with their husbands, seek to

portray or evaluate the relationship (s) that the two wives in the selected plays ‘enjoyed’ with their husbands. The way the society is handled by the masculine gender facilitates the building of a patriarchal order which places the masculine gender higher than the feminine one, in the society.

Bryce (1988) says “woman then is produced by patriarchy systems as ‘other’ and unto her is projected everything that man is not. She is the negative to his positive, emotional to his rational, weak to his spiritual, absent to his present, orient to his occident, dark to his light, and object to his subject”. This typically is in line with the argument that advanced in a different work that, “since man has occupied the positive and neutral poles in the linguistic framework, women are left with only the negative. It later follows to say that if a man is strong, woman must be weak” (Owonibi, 92). In one of the texts, *Nke M Ji Ka*, the consistent encounters and issues which the wife Ugochi ‘enjoys’ with her husband Onyekwere could be termed unfriendly. He always wants to make her understand that she is and would always remain under him especially as he is the king of Umuemelele village. He doesn’t care how she feels at any time. Always insensitive to her emotions. She could be crying with her children consoling her and when he enters, he goes ahead to ignore them and demand for his food as seen in Act 1 scene 1:

Eze: Anazighi m aju gi ihe gi na ha na-akpa. Ihe m chorọ ima bu ma o dikwa ihe e siri mmadu ga- emetu na nke bu onu, ka m ga-efukwu ebe ihe m furu? Ebe m maara nke oma na nke m ketere n’uwa m lorọ bu naani nke m riri n’onu, biko Ugochi echezina ka m na-echetere gi ihe gbasara afo m echetere. ‘I am no longer asking you what you were discussing with them. What I want to find out is if there is any edible thing that one can put in his mouth, or will I get lost where my property/thing is lost? Since I know very

well that what I gained in this my world is what I eat in my mouth, please Ugochi don't allow me remind you about my stomach.'

In this excerpt, Eze Onyekwere reacts like an insensitive and selfish person who thinks about himself alone. That over bearing spirit in him comes up whenever he sees his wife. He always wants to exert authority even without knowing the state of his family especially his wife. The word 'please' could be regarded as a respectful way of saying something to someone but in this case, it was insulting and has an element of threats in it. He was not joking when he said that because the text reveals him as a bully who spares no one even his wife. He is an arrogant and a proud fellow who thinks that a woman is and should be subjected to agony. The Igbo people say that *nga nga bute ụzọ, ọdịda esobe ya*, meaning that when one allows pride to overtake him, downfall follows. Being a king, Eze Onyekwere steps on his wife's toes without apologies. His downfall started as a result of pride, constant maltreatment of his wife and *I don't care attitude* which made the church to send him to jail. As seen in Act 4 scene 2.

N'ulo nga, Eze no na nga. Onye nche ndi nga na-eche ya ... 'In prison, Eze is in the prison. A prison warder is keeping watch on him ...'

This came as a shock to his people because it is almost seen as a taboo for a village head not to talk of a king to be sent to jail as a result of his actions towards his wife.

In this same text, consistently, Eze Onyekwere prefers listening and taking advice that concerns his family from his elder sister Ogooma. His wife doesn't contribute in the affairs of her family. Whenever and whatever Ogooma says, will always stand. She was the instigator of getting another wife for Eze Onyekwere because Ugochi couldn't bear a son. As seen in 2, scene 3 as thus;

Ogo: Hapu okwu, okpara nne m, ka m tinyesie anya ike na mmiri n'okwu banyere nwaanyi ohuru a. 'Do not talk further, my elder brother, let me be more serious with my search for a new wife.'

Consistently, Eze Onyekwere uses abusive words on his wife. Ugochi never enjoyed any cordial relationship with her husband that was genuine. It was more of insults and raining of abuses. As if that is not enough, he beats her at the slightest provocation as seen in Act 2, Scene 3;

Eze: Bido tiwe Ugochi ihe, tirikwuo ma umu ya, ha niile etiri mkpu gbapu. 'Started beating Ugochi, including their children, all shouted and ran out.'

This shows the kind of ill relationship existing between the father and his children. The poor children are not left out in his maltreatment. This is called transferred aggression, whereby a person transfers anger to someone who is not the cause of his anger. Ordinarily, the poor kids deserve to enjoy father's love because they are harmless and ignorant of any situation in the family.

Talking about consistent encounters or issues with their husbands in *Onye Loro Mkpuru Udara*, the protagonist, Chiezugo who happens to be Emetaa's wife passed through a lot too. Just like the wife, Ugochi in the text, she loves her husband so well to the extent that she swallows every insult from him just to keep the marriage sledding. Chiezugo apologies to her husband at every provocation made to her by her husband. She is actually the reason why her marriage is still in good shape. Because she vows to carter for her children, it was not easy for her to abandon her children in her husband's house. Unlike Ugochi in *Nke M Ji Ka* who at first did not have a male child, Chiezugo, had both male and female children, yet her husband does not appreciate her. Instead of seeing

and acknowledging her as his wife, he prefers to listen and take advice from his sister, Adanne concerning his wife. He discusses his wife with his sister. This is seen in Act 2;

N'ututu, Adanne na Emetaa nọrọ n'otu ebe n'ụlọ ha. Adanne na-akpanyere nwanne ya nwoke bụ Emetaa nkata banyere ihe mere n'etiti ya na Chiezugo na nne ha. 'In the morning, Adanne and Emetaa were sitting in a place in their house. Adanne was discussing with his brother about what transpired among them.'

The husbands in both texts use foul languages on their wives. Despite this, the wives still stayed in their marriages. It is said that action begets reaction but, in this case, no violent reaction was recorded, instead the wives kept mute and took it upon themselves to ignore them. A foul language is a coarse or offensive language. It most times contains rude words. It is profane, inappropriate, unacceptable and most especially, so unpleasant to the ears that hear them. In *Onye Loro Mkpuru Udara*, Chiezugo endured a lot of them from her husband, Emetaa. He uses them on her as though it is a regular means of communication in the family. Words like *nwoke m*, (47) were seen. Calling a woman such name is suggestive of an insult. In the first instance, she is not a man so calling her the above name is impolite. Also, *ikuku maburu gi...* meaning wind blow you off, *Taa kpuchie onu gi* meaning shut up!, *mgbo piapukwa gi isi* meaning bullet should blow off your head were all used by Emetaa to his wife. This type of scenario was also portrayed in the later text, as Eze Onyekwere did not spare his wife Ugochi of such abusive and foul words. In Act 2, scene 3, one of them was seen as thus;

Eze: Olee ebe o nọ ekwu ihe ahụ? Ka alaghị ahịa kpọ ya na nne ya ahụ ihu. 'Where is she saying that from? May she and her mother never return from the market.'

This is regarded as a curse in the Igbo society. Telling someone not to return from the market means that the person in question should get lost or probably never return. Even if the person dies in the process, it still does not matter. This was exactly what Eze Onyekwere wished his wife and daughter. He called his wife all sorts of names like; *nwaanyi bu ite aru n'isi* meaning the woman with a pot of abomination on her head, *nwa anu mpam*, meaning the child of an animal. All these are suggestive of the fact that both husbands in the selected texts are not in a consistent friendly relationship as husband and wife.

In summary of the above, both wives in the texts, did not have a cordial relationship with their husbands yet they decided to stay back in their marriages for the sake of their children. They consistently had issues with their husbands which were mostly influenced by a third party-their sister in law. Both wives suffered maltreatments from their husbands as a result of what is eating into the fabrics of most African homes especially the Igbo homes, having someone from the extended family who pock noses into the affairs of another simply because he or she has a family relationship with either the wife or the husband. In most cases, it comes from the husband's side.

In the area of their position in the marriage, their duties and responsibilities, Chiezugo and Ugochi who are wives in texts were unfortunate in marriage. Their positions in their marriages appear so similar that one may begin to wonder if that is how a woman suffers or passes through in marriage. For instance, for Chiezugo in *Onye loro mkpuru udara*, her position is thwarted. She is a wife though she is not permitted to stand out as one. She doesn't have right to take decisions by herself, even when she does, she is punished. She is denied her freedom of movement. As the wife in the family, she is left to take and carter for her children by herself.

It is sole responsibility of both husband and wife to carter for their children but in her own case, she does it all by herself. The husband didn't keep to any of his promises to his wife. In Act 3, Scene 1, Chiezugo laments as thus;

Ka ukochukwu mechara njiko n'udi otu Kraist, di na nwunye wee puo ezi mana Chiezugo no n'otu akuku wee na-echeta nkwa niile di ya bu Emetaa kwere n'ubochi nke ha. O chetere na o nweghi nke o na-eme mana ya bu Chiezugo gbara mbu na-eme nke o kwetara iwe wee ju ya obi. Ihu ya gbarusia. 'As the priest was done with officiating the holy matrimony union in the Church, the husband and wife left but Chiezugo stayed at one end and was remembering all the vows that her husband, Emetaa made on their own day. She remembered that he doesn't keep to any of them but she, Chiezugo tried to maintain hers and she became angry. Her face changed'.

Vows are meant to be kept, promises are also meant to be kept. The Igbo say that *uka akpara akpa bu isi ka e ji ekwe ya*, meaning that agreement is agreement. As mortals, it may not be too easy to keep to all the vows made but the Igbo also say that *aru gbaa afo, o buru omenala*, when an evil or unacceptable thing is done repeatedly, it becomes a tradition. In the above excerpt, Chiezugo was lamenting not because her husband is fulfilling majority of his own vow but that he totally does not fulfil any. This indeed, could be heartbreaking.

Taking the full responsibility of the family as a wife, is not what the Igbo family is known for. There are duties in the family and there are responsibilities, each assigned to every member of the family. The father is the head, breadwinner and provider of his family that is why he is referred to as *dibia ulo*. The wife assists him by utilizing what he has provided for the family and also takes care of the children by assisting in training them. When the reverse

becomes the case, it is assumed that the husband has failed in his own responsibility as the head of the family. In this text, Chiezugo took up the responsibility of the man. Anybody who could single handedly train his or her children should be celebrated. This is a decision she took when her father died. Until her father's demise, he was the person fending for his daughter and her children. So when he died, she took it upon herself to do everything possible and within her reach to train her children since her husband has abandoned his responsibility.

In *Nke m ji ka*, Ugochi had her daughters all to herself. It was not a selfish act but a natural thing which happens when children feel secure with a particular person. Eze Onyekwere, as a husband and a father is an unapproachable being who maltreats both his wife and children. For the singular act and more, the children found solace with their mother and automatically she takes full responsibility for them. Another reason for Onyekwere not taking responsibility of his children is because he sees them as mere daughters who would be 'sold' to another man and they become that man's property. This has been the Igbo ideology from time immemorial that a woman is still hanging in her husband's house if she has not given him a male child who would bear her husband's name. This is a typical case of Ugochi in this text. Because she had no son initially, her husband punishes her by making her to take care and full responsibility of 'her daughters' and everything that concerns her. This he made categorically known in Act 2, Scene 3;

Eze: Ihe m ji maka ya kpọọ gi bụ ka m kọsaara gi ihe a merenụ, gwakwanụ gi na anya m apụọọla n'ebe Ugochi nọ site taa gawa n'ihu. Ya nwụwa anwụwa, fuwe efuwe, onye akpọkwana m. Ụnụ nụkwara ihe m na-ekwu? 'The reason why I called you is to tell you what happened, and also to let you know that I have hands off

in Ugochi's matters from today henceforth. If she is dying, getting lost, nobody should call me. Did you all hear me?'

The above, is a very harsh way of telling someone that he is on his own. The Igbo people say that *okọ kowa anumanu, o chowa aja aja mana o kowa mmadu, o chowa mmadu ibe ya*. This is an Igbo proverb and it literally means that when an animal wants to scratch itself, it goes to the wall to assist it do the scratching but when it happens to a human, he looks for a fellow human to assist him. This shows that man can and should not live alone. He needs one another for survival not to talk of a husband categorically stating that he has hands off his wife's matters which involves not providing for her needs too.

Hidden resentments are some signs that one may be harboring which may include; continual or recurring feelings of a strong emotion such as anger, especially when one is thinking about a specific interaction or experience. In some cases, feeling of regret may come up. In the texts, at some instances, Chiezugo and Ugochi regretted their marriages but for fear or avoidance of conflict, they decided to take the bull by the horn. Hidden resentments are why people who seemed perfectly happy suddenly snap and get angry about irrational things. A person experiencing resentment will often feel a complex variety of emotions that include anger, disappointments, bitterness and hard feelings. Chiezugo in *Onye Loro Mkpuru Udara* remembers how her husband begged her parents before marrying and the kind of treatment she is now receiving from her husband and she is left with no other option than to be always angry and full of regrets.

Chiezugo: ... O di mma, Chineke buru onye inye aka m niihina onye Chi ya akwatughị ihe adighi eme ya. Ekwetala m di ruo n'onwu mana nke ada nne gi bu enyemaka Chi ka m-na-arịọ... '...

It's alright, may God be my helper because he who is not pulled down by his creator is indeed free from harm. I agree to my husband till death but that of your elder sister, is the help of God that I seek ...'

From the voice or tone of the complainant, one would sense, tiredness and regret of someone who is struggling to raise her head from maltreatments of two persons who she cannot run away from; her husband and her sister-in-law. For the avoidance of the initial mentioned conflict in her home, she leaves everything to God her creator to handle for her.

In the second text, *Nke m ji ka*, Ugochi was initially deprived of her conjugal duties by her husband because she had no male child. Her inability to have male children at first, made her husband to get another woman, who was later sent packing because she couldn't bear a son. During those periods of the second woman's stay in the house, her husband totally ignores her and this makes her often sad to the extent of leaving her problems to her creator.

Ugo: O kwurū otu ebe lewe anya n'elu. O! Chukwu nna, meerenụ m ihe I mere nwaanyị amụtaghị nwa nwoke, nke I siri onye nsọ gi bụ Elisha nyeere aka. 'She stood at a place, looking up. O! God the father, do unto me, that which you did for the woman who did bear a son, the one you told your prophet Elisha to help.'

This indicates that this woman in question has and is still going through hell because she couldn't bear a son for her husband. When a person unconsciously looks up or looks aimlessly, it is said that that person is lost in thought. It comes up as a result of over thinking or depression. For Ugochi to be looking up shows that so many things are bothering her. She was indeed lost in thought as the passage clearly indicates that she was all alone and talking to herself.

All these are clear indications that both wives in the texts suffered hidden resentments caused by different factors but for the sake of peace, their children and societal expectations, they stayed in their marriages to endure them. They both believe that their Creators will see them through. This is seen as both wives called on their Chi for assistance and vindication.

Concept of wife

A woman is not a wife if she is not legally and properly married to a man. This means that she is the wife of a particular man/husband. This implies that a wife is a female in a marital relationship. When a woman is separated from her husband, she continues to be a wife until the marriage is legally dissolved with a divorce judgment. This is what happens in the modern society. A good wife exhibits both care and compassion. She is sensitive to the family's needs and does her best always, to provide a solution. She tries to be a source of solace to her husband and children. Her caring disposition makes sure that her family does not lack in any aspect of life. Husbands are supposed to love and cherish their wives just like the way the scripture in 1 Peter 3:7 addresses it as thus, "in the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life". This is to show that there is no superiority when it comes to marriage.

Coming down to societal norms, a wife in the Igbo society is that woman who is legitimately married to a man and has male children who will take over from their father when he is gone. This was exactly what Buchi Emecheta perceives when she wrote, 'For she lives in a society where she has no identity, is not considered a complete woman, unless she bears children, male children who will continue their father's line ...' This statement could be the

main reason why some wives pass through a lot in their husband's house when they are unable to do this exact thing required of them; which is, having male children for her husband even if it is one male. Similarly, Ezeilo (2011:253) formulates that in the vast majority of Igbo community, the family grouping is strictly patrilineal. Succession is based on the principle of primogeniture, which means that, succession is by the eldest son known in Igbo land as *Ọkpala* or *Diọkpala*. The means that the birth of a male child really gives a wife chair in her husband's house. In some cases too, the wife may have male children for her husband and still live under a lot of troubles. The question will then be, what and what are required of a wife to maintain her dignity in her family and the outside world.

Brook (2016) says 'drama is exposure; it is confrontation; it is contradiction and it leads to analysis, construction, recognition, and eventually to an awakening understanding'. This means that drama as a genre of literature, comes with a lot of lessons to be drawn from it. The stories in the plays are meant to arouse one's understanding. The selected drama books portray the wives in them as typical examples of women who possess the characteristics of a good wife. To the understanding of any sane person, the characteristics that Ugochi and Chiezugo in *Nke M Ji Ka* and *Onye Loro Mkpuru Udara* respectively possess, are what a man looks out for in a woman.

The wife in *Onye loro mkpuru udara*

A woman leaves her parents' house and goes to leave with a man and they become one, just as it is conceived in Christianity. This is as it is in the case of a woman known as Chiezugo. She leaves her parents; Anyadike and Oyeoma to become Emetaa's wife. She was traditionally married to her husband which made her a recognized wife to her husband.

Emetaa na ndị be ha agaala be Anyadike dika e siri kaa ha mee ihe niile di n'alumdi, n'isi Chiezugo wee kpọrọ ya laa na be ha. Ha wee biri dika di na nwunye. (Pg. 20) 'Emetaa and his people have gone to Anyadike's house as agreed and performed marriage rites and took Chiezugo to their house. Both of them then lived as husband and wife.'

The above is to ascertain that she was dully married to her husband. As a wife, Chiezugo loves her husband but what she got in return was terrible; hatred, maltreatment and disrespect from her husband and her. In African society, particularly in Igbo land, when a woman is married to a family, she is married not only to her husband but to everyone in her husband's family, age of the person notwithstanding. If the woman is lucky, she may be married to a family where every member is lovable and if she is not lucky, then reverse may be the case. These family members may hate the wife for no reason. It is always hell for the wife if her husband supports any of the family member against her wife. In Chiezugo's case, her sister in law was her can of worms. The said sister in law known as Adanne maltreats both Chiezugo and her children for no reason. She poisons her brother's mind over his wife thereby making her brother hate his family without any concrete reason. He suspects his wife at every slightest move. There is practically no trust. His maltreatment and suspicion continued even while she was pregnant. She goes to the hospital for ante natal care, he doubts her (pg. 22).

The wife in *Nke m ji ka*

In the text above, two wives were mentioned but because of what is obtainable in the present day society, which is also portrayed in same text, the recognized wife is Ugochi who is married to the king of Umueleme community. Because she initially bore only

daughters for her husband, she is regarded as a no body to the extent that her opinions do not count. She suffers a lot because her husband is a typical Igbo cultured man who places so much value on the male children. She was even ostracized even in her own house as her husband vows not to be part of anything that concerns her. She endures all kinds of negligence, hatred, agony and maltreatment for the sake of her daughters. She became a 'wife' as recognized by her husband the day her twin sons were born. She was always monitored. Her husbands does not trust her movements to the extent that he tells his servant, Echefu to always follow her from afar and give him reports of all her moves. On one occasion the servant came reporting to her as thus;

Eche: Ihe I jiri hụ m ebe a bụ na Eze sịrị m bịa mara ebe ị nọ. ... Eze sị m were nwayọọ jee mara ma ị nọ na kraashị mgbede eziokwu. Ọ sị na ọ bụrụ na gị anoghị na kraashị m jisie ike mata ebe gị nọ. 'The reason why you see me here is that Eze said that I should find out where you are. ... Eze said that I should quietly check if you are truly in the evening class. He said that if you are not in the class that I should try to find out where you are.'

This is a clear picture of suspicion and doubt too, coming from a supposed husband. Sending a servant to monitor and report back the movements of his madam is degrading and insulting. In his capacity as a servant, boundaries are not to be crossed. For the husband to use him for such mission shows how inhuman he is to his wife and for that, does not consider her worthy enough of his respect.

Reason(s) why the women choose to be wives instead of working out of an abusive marriage

As shown in the selected texts Ugochi and Chiezugo suffer a lot of hazards and trauma yet they prefer to be wives to their husbands

instead of leaving the abused marriage. This is to say that to be a wife requires a lot of sacrifices even when there are thorns in the journey. The Igbo people will ask, *o kwa obi ka a na-agwa?* Meaning, is it not the heart that is been punctured? Whatever these women went through affected them one way or the other in their hearts. They endured a lot of abnormalities which left them traumatized. These are enough reasons for a woman who has no enduring spirit to walk out of a marriage. Both wives still lived with their husbands and still respected them.

Nowadays, it is recorded that some wives do not have the ‘shock absorber’ in them to withstand half of what the women in the texts went through. This is the reason why divorce is on the increase, with a good number of them walking out of the marriage. They will end up by saying; *o bu onye gba akpukpu ukwu ma ebe o na-afu ya.* Meaning that it is he who is wearing the shoe that knows where it is pinching him.

In the case of Ugochi and Chiezugo, they stayed for some reasons. They had cause and reason for staying back in the marriage; their children. Their children are their sources of consolation. They cannot imagine leaving them behind for their abusive husbands. This made them so determined to fend for themselves and their children. In *Nke M Ji Ka*, Ugochi emphasized on the above as thus in Act 2, scene 1;

Ugo: Ekele diri Chukwu. Aguu agaghị egbu mụ na umu m n’oge a. Onye di m Eze mazi bu nwunye oheru ya. ‘Thanks be to God. Hunger will not kill my children and I in this time. The person my husband, Eze knows is his new wife.’

This passage above reveals that the only reason why she lives is her children. In her utterances, her husband was not mentioned as one who should be fend for. Her only worries are her children

who are the people she falls back on. Out of jealousy, she may have left the marriage as her husband only concentrates only on his new wife but she stayed back because her children are her source of joy and survival.

In the other text, Chiezugo took it upon herself to train all her children. She endures all the maltreatments from her husband which is enough reason for her to leave the marriage but she stayed back too to train herself and her children, no matter what it takes. This is clearly stated in Act 4, scene 1;

Chiezugo horo ntutu wee zuo onwe ya n'akwukwo di elu o wee nwete oru Bekee na-enye ya ego zuuru ya na umu ya. 'Chiezugo struggled and trained herself in the higher Institution and got a white collar job that pays her well enough for herself and her children.'

As also seen in the first text, their husbands were not mentioned as part of their plan. This is a clear indication that they have long endured their husbands. It also shows that their said husbands are in a supposed better state where they think are better enough for themselves.

As wives, did they finally gain?

It is believed that nothing good comes easy. The ability for one to stay strong till the end, makes that person an overcomer. The Igbo people say, *o tee aka o jiri di njo, o di mma* meaning that a prolonged bad time, gives room for a new dawn. The Igbo people also advice that, *onye egbula onwe ya mgbe ihe di njo*, do not kill yourself when things are bad. This is true because no one knows what will happen the next minute. That is also the reason for the saying that; *naanị ihe amaghị ka a ga-esi mee ya bu onwu*. The only thing without remedy is death which implies that once there is life, there is hope.

For Ugochi and Chiezugo to maintain being wives, they passed through humiliations, difficult times, agony and so on, endured all of them, wiped their tears and forged ahead. These self-consolation, paved way for them as they rejoiced at last because he who laughs last, laughs best. All of these are possible for them because they didn't allow their sufferings weigh them down. For Ugochi, she later became the chosen one as she finally gave birth to a set of twins who are males. After every struggle, she and her sons were finally accepted by her husband and she became the wife that she so desired. One can imagine the magnitude of happiness and unity that follow after the union.

For Chiezugo, her sufferings made her strong. She trained herself in school, got a well-paid job, got elevated in her place of work and also became a wife that she so desired. She became a happy and fulfilled woman. In her own case, she is termed an independent woman who no longer depends on her husband for survival. It has been proven that nothing unifies husband and wife like getting double means of income in the family.

Conclusion

It is not a new thing to say that women undergo a lot of abnormality to remain wives. This is to say that one thing is to be a woman and another thing is to be a wife. A woman has to prepare her mindset in case of eventualities before embarking on the journey of becoming someone's wife. From time immemorial, the male folks have been dominating the female counterpart. Things have started to take another dimension in the contemporary time as so many factors have really started to change this perception. Education has a great role to play in the lives of women and things have changed a lot to help ease things for a lot of women and wives. To the younger ladies out there, marriage is full of experiences, the good, bad and ugly ones. Your ability to find a way or means of making

yours work makes you remain a wife. Finding a reason to live and having something to live for, also keeps you going as a wife.

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