

The background of the cover is a detailed illustration of a futuristic classroom. In the center, a large, glowing globe of the Earth is suspended from the ceiling. The classroom has a curved, orange-tinted ceiling with numerous small, white, disc-shaped lights. Students, some wearing face masks, are seated at long white tables, working on laptops. Large windows on the right side of the room offer a view of a landscape with mountains, trees, and a sunset sky. The overall atmosphere is one of global connectivity and modern education.

ENGLISH LITERATURE: A GLOBAL CANVAS OF VOICES, VIEWS AND VISIONS

Dr. R. Kavitha



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. A STUDY OF NIGERIAN CULTURE AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT IN FLORA NWAPA’S ONE IS ENOUGH	1
2. “TARA”: A STUDY OF FEMALE SELF – DISCOVERY AND EMPOWERMENT	5
3. UNRAVELING THE COMPLEXITY OF MULTI-WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN NAMITA GOKHALE’S “ <i>PARO: DREAMS OF PASSION</i> ”	12
4. ECOFEMINISM AND THE APOCALYPSE: A READING OF MARGARET ATWOOD'S <i>THE HANDMAID'S TALE</i>	17
5. "VOICES ACROSS BORDERS: IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND SOCIETAL CHALLENGES IN 'AMERICANAH' BY CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE AND 'A FINE BALANCE BY ROHINTON MISTRY'"	23
6. BEYOND BORDERS: ENGLISH LITERATURE AS A MEDIUM FOR CULTURAL NARRATIVES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	31
7. WAR IN INDIAN NOVELS: AN EXPLORATION OF CONFLICT, IDENTITY, AND TRAUMA	36
8. A STUDY OF FEMALE DESPAIR AND RESILIENCE IN ANITA DESAI’S FASTING AND FEASTING	42
9. EXPLORING FEMININE POWER AND IDENTITY IN CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI’S “THE PALACE OF ILLUSIONS”	46
10. UNRAVELLING THE THREADS OF TRAUMA: BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS, RESILIENCE, AND COLLECTIVE HEALING IN LAURA MCBRIDE'S WE ARE CALLED TO RISE	50
11. ACROSS HORIZONS: ENGLISH LITERATURE AS A GLOBAL MOSAIC	58

1

A STUDY OF NIGERIAN CULTURE AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN FLORA NWAPA'S ONE IS ENOUGH

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ABSTRACT

Flora Nwapa's *One is Enough* examines the intersections of culture, gender, and women's empowerment in Nigerian society through the story of Amaka, a woman navigating intense societal pressures and personal aspirations. The novel highlights Amaka's painful struggle with infertility, a significant issue faced by many women in Nigerian society. The narrative critiques traditional views on women's roles while also exploring the protagonist's journey toward self-fulfillment, independence, and resilience. Through Amaka's journey, *One is Enough* addresses the complex ways in which women negotiate traditional values with modern aspirations, striving for empowerment beyond imposed roles. Nwapa presents Amaka not as a passive victim but as a woman determined to find fulfillment beyond the expectations of marriage and motherhood, suggesting a path of self-realization and economic agency that resonates with broader themes of women's independence in the face of cultural adversity. Nwapa's portrayal emphasizes that self-worth and empowerment are achievable for women within the evolving socio-cultural fabric of modern Nigeria.

Key words : Culture,empowerment, societal pressures

INTRODUCTION

One is Enough (1981), Flora Nwapa's fourth novel, narrates a woman's quest to live on her own terms. The protagonist, Amaka, embarks on a journey of self-discovery in a community that places immense value on female fertility. The story opens with Amaka apologizing—not

for any wrongdoing, but simply because she has been married to Obiora for six years without bearing a child. This inability to conceive causes her husband and his mother to treat her with disdain. Obiora grows irritable and indifferent, dismissing anything she has to say. Seen as a failure by her community due to her childlessness, Amaka becomes burdened by the society's judgment, driving her to consult every gynecologist she can find in an attempt to prove she can conceive.

Nwapa poignantly depicts the position of women within Igbo society, where marriage and procreation are considered central to a woman's purpose. A woman's personal independence is restricted, with her earnings often expected to support family members, and even her business success seen as secondary to her role in the family. Initially, Amaka internalizes these values, which contribute to her low self-esteem and her willingness to endure Obiora's cruelty for the sake of preserving her marriage. Despite her business success she earns more than her husband and even gifts him a Peugeot car Obiora insists on taking credit for the car purchase to uphold his own reputation, and Amaka quietly acquiesces to keep the peace. However, after years without children and the relentless emotional abuse from her husband and mother-in-law, Amaka decides to leave. She chooses to seek out a new life and opportunities in Lagos, hoping for a fresh start and a brighter future.

After arriving in Lagos, Amaka learns the shrewd strategies required to succeed as a businesswoman. She resolves never to remarry, though she does go on to have children. Through her experiences, Amaka comes to believe that women can find happiness, fulfillment, and success without marriage, provided they achieve financial independence. Driven by betrayal and disillusionment, she leaves her old life behind and builds a successful business career in Lagos, where she eventually enters into a relationship with a Catholic priest and gives birth to twin children.

Years of childlessness in her marriage led to her mother-in-law forcing her out, with her husband, Obiora, supporting the decision and remarrying under his mother's influence. Through Amaka's journey, Nwapa emphasizes the importance of women defending their physical autonomy against male violence. The abuse Amaka suffered taught her a vital lesson: she would never again allow any man to strike her without defending herself. True to her convictions, Amaka advises a newlywed woman facing domestic violence to resist her husband's attacks. Leading by example, Amaka practices what she preaches, standing up to violence and encouraging other women to assert themselves in the face of abuse.

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Amaka's first bold step toward self-fulfillment is ending her marriage a courageous decision in a society where a woman who leaves her husband faces judgment and intense psychological pressure. Nwapa makes it clear to the reader that this choice is not made lightly; rather, Amaka feels compelled to leave due to the unfair treatment from her husband and mother-in-law after six childless years of marriage. Determined to rebuild her life, she relocates to Lagos.

In Lagos, Amaka resumes her work as a contractor with support from her brother-in-law, the husband of her sister Ayo, who connects her with an Alhaji working in the Ministry. This partnership proves highly beneficial for Amaka and marks a pivotal change in her life. Additionally, through Ayo, Amaka meets Father Mclaid, whose connections prove even more valuable than those of the Alhaji. Father Mclaid introduces her to a Brigadier, who offers her a contract worth half a million naira, twenty-five percent of which she retains. This newfound financial independence enables Amaka to repay the dowry to her former husband, officially finalizing their divorce and marking her newfound autonomy..

Amaka's newfound success and prosperity reveal her generous nature. She supports her friend, Adaobi, by involving her in contract work, which allows Adaobi to save enough money to build a home. Amaka's help becomes even more significant when Adaobi, her husband Mike, and their children are forced out of their official residence following a military coup, and they can now move into their own home.

Amaka's mother also experiences a transformation in her attitude towards her daughter. Notably, after the second year of Amaka's marriage, her mother had advised her to leave Obiora or to seek children with another man. Displeased by Amaka's refusal, she was deeply hurt when Amaka, four years later, returned home after being driven out by her husband and mother-in-law. Initially, Amaka's mother was harsh and critical, using unforgiving words. However, her attitude has softened over time, now showing respect and even pride for Amaka. With two sons and financial success, Amaka's mother now views her daughter as an accomplished woman.

Amaka's experiences in her marriage explain her reluctance to remarry, but it is evident that she is thriving on her own. She has achieved the two goals that women in the novel are encouraged to pursue: financial independence and children. Her mother now sees her as fortunate, having built a fulfilling life on her own terms.

CONCLUSION

Amaka has emerged as a renowned businesswoman and a mother. Through her journey, she conveys a powerful message to the reader about the inevitability of transformation and the possibility of redefining a woman's identity despite the persistent hold of patriarchy and male dominance. *One is Enough* emphasizes that a woman does not need to remarry to regain respect, challenging traditional expectations placed on women. While colonial rule has ended, female subjugation continues. During colonial times, Igbo women were often viewed passively, as objects of male desire. Post-independence, they began to assert themselves, symbolizing three key aspects: struggle, self-empowerment through wealth, and the reaffirmation of cultural values.

The first represents the clash of gender roles; the second, the pursuit of financial independence to gain influence; and the third, Amaka's acceptance of motherhood through the birth of twins, reflecting a vital aspect of Igbo culture. Thus, Amaka remains connected to traditional women in some ways, yet she also defies convention by leaving her husband, choosing not to remarry, and achieving economic freedom on her own terms.

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