



Empowerment of Women in Pearl S Buck's *Pavilion of Women and The Good Earth*

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Abstract

A good story, just like a good sentence, does more than one job at once. That is what literature is: a story that does more than telling. Pearl S Buck was born on 26th June, 1892 at Hillsboro, West Virginia. She is a nineteenth century writer. Buck has completed her early education at Shanghai University in 1907.

The women who break down barriers are those who ignore limits in the society. Empowerment can be defined as “multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives.

They start a family in their small country town, and endure gruelling times, including droughts, floods, and war. Wang Lung and O-Lan work hard to ensure their family's survival, and their persistence finally prevails when the land produces great riches.

During the hard times as an alien in the new land the family suffers a lot. O-Lan kills her second daughter at birth to spare her the misery of growing up in such hard times, and to give the remaining family a better chance to survive.

As an empowered woman, she takes up the family's problems and solves it. Through the character of Madam Wu, one can understand the meaning of marriage, motherhood, and family, the value of self-discipline, and the constraints of gender roles in marital life.

A good story, just like a good sentence, does more than one job at once. That is what literature is: a story that does more than telling a story, a story that manages to reflect in some way the multi-layered texture of life itself- Karen Thompson Walker. Writings about a particular culture, religion, philosophy or the study of those works may emerge in different genres of literature such as prose and poetry and further classified as novel, short story and drama. In the beginning the importance was given to the written text of the happenings of the real events. Every literary work was instructive in approach with an underlying religious aspect.

Literature of America began with orally transferred myths, tales and lyrics. American literature takes a new path in the seventeenth century in progressing the impact of European civilization. American literature dates back from pre-colonial period till the contemporary date.

“America is a poem in our eyes: its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for meters”(143). The words are those of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and they sum that desire to turn the New World into words which has seized the imagination of so many Americans.

Pearl S Buck was born on 26th June, 1892 at Hillsboro, West Virginia. She is a nineteenth century writer. Buck has completed her early education at Shanghai University in 1907. She completed her Bachelor's degree in The United States in the year 1910. Buck completed her studies in philosophy and worked as professor in The United States. She is the first female laureate in America. Buck was the fourth female writer to receive Nobel Prize in Literature in the year 1938. She has won Pulitzer Prize for her novel *The Good Earth* (1932).

The renowned Swami Vivekananda quoted, “There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing” (125). The women who break down barriers are those who ignore limits in the society. Empowerment can be defined as “multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. Women's empowerment refers to “women's ability to make strategic life choices where that ability had been previously denied them”.

In the novel *The Good Earth*, O-Lan is a fictional character. She is a slave girl in the House of Hwang who gains her freedom when she marries the novel's protagonist, Wang Lung. They start a family in their small country town, and endure gruelling times, including droughts, floods, and war. Wang Lung and O-Lan work hard to ensure their family's survival, and their persistence finally prevails when the

land produces great riches.

O-Lan is an illiterate but she is valuable to Wang Lung for her skills with good sense, and indomitable work ethic. Wang Lung, through his own hard work and the skill and hard work of his wife, O-Lan, slowly earns enough money to buy land from the Hwang family, piece by piece. She is a hard-working and self-sacrificing mother towards her children during the hard times they faced in the new society.

During the hard times as an alien in the new land the family suffers a lot. O-Lan kills her second daughter at birth to spare her the misery of growing up in such hard times, and to give the remaining family a better chance to survive. During the devastating famine and drought, the family must flee to a large city in the south to find work. O-Lan as a mother in order to protect her own children she begged in the city to feed her starving children.

During a riot in the new city, Wang Lung loots some money from a rich man and O-Lan with her smart and hard-working skill she saved some jewels in the new land. With the money that Wang Lung looted, the family returns to their own land where they started their life as farmers. With the help of O-Lan's jewels, Lung bought the rest of the land from the House of Hwang and they started to prosper in their own land.

In the novel *The Good Earth*, when O-Lan, a servant girl, marries the peasant Wang Lung, she toils tirelessly through her four pregnancies for their family's survival. Half-starved, the family joins thousands to beg on the city streets. All seems lost, until O-Lan's desperate will to survive returns them home with undreamt-of wealth.

One of the Buck's epic novel is *Pavilion of Women* which speaks about the women's plight in late 1930's China. The protagonist of the novel is Madam Wu. At the age forty, Madame Wu is beautiful and much respected as the wife of one of China's oldest upper-class houses. Her birthday wish is to find a young concubine for her husband and to move to separate quarters, starting a new chapter of her life. When her wish is granted, she finds herself at leisure, she is no longer consumed by running a sixty-person household. After her decision, she started a new life where is free to read books which was previously forbidden her, to learn English, and to discover her own mind. The family in the compound

are shocked at the results, especially when she begins learning from a progressive, excommunicated Catholic priest.

On her 40th birthday, Madam Wu, sets out to divest herself of all the familial responsibilities that have been consuming her life. Her quest to live for herself is aided and complicated by her youngest son's tutor, Brother Andre, a progressive Western priest.

“I will spend the rest of my life assembling my own mind and my own soul. I will take care of my body carefully, not that it may any more please a man, but because it houses me and therefore I am dependent upon it.”(25)

Pavilion of Women is a story of the spiritual and intellectual awakening of Madame Wu, a pampered wife of the wealthy House of Wu. After her retirement the household spins into chaos, her heart is in turmoil as well. As an empowered woman, she takes up the family's problems and solves it. Through the character of Madam Wu, one can understand the meaning of marriage, motherhood, and family, the value of self-discipline, and the constraints of gender roles in marital life.

Buck shows her awareness of her art as being not only a means of personal self-expression, but also, a way of reaching out to the larger issues of society. In this sense, therefore, she may be described as a socially confined writer, who strives to make a difference through her work mainly through her women characters. Those women characters in the novels undergo trauma which later made them to be strong in the society.

Works Cited.

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