



Theme Of Education And Empowerment In Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*

Parul Pandey

Research Scholar, Hemchand Yadav University

Dr. Somali Gupta

Professor, Department of English

Govt. V.Y.T PG Autonomous College, Durg

In many African countries, it is customary to deprive women of the same educational opportunities as males, hence keeping them from achieving parity. The present investigation centres on Buchi Emecheta's handling of the practical function of education for African women, as portrayed fictionally in her book *Second Class Citizen* (1974). The protagonist of the story is seen in the paper fighting against patriarchal, racial, and cultural repressive factors that deny African women the opportunity to receive a quality education. The research traces Adah's educational path and sheds light on how education may empower African women both academically and economically. Additionally, education is crucial to freeing African women from tyranny and servitude. With education, Adah realises her dreams of being a successful mother and a budding writer.

Keywords: Liberation, empowerment, female education

The central theme of Emecheta's novel, "*Second Class Citizen*," is the strong opposition to gender favouritism that permeates the populace's culture. Adah is treated as her husband's property because of gender inequality, which is the reason she is brought down and has become the cornerstone of her marriage. Francis attends school, studies, and consistently fails exams; she is compelled to provide for the family and is in charge of the kids. Adah fights valiantly to maintain her femininity, so when she finally lets go of Francis,

she has a brief moment of comfort. Later on, she goes through a period of loneliness and sorrow, but she eventually emerges victorious with her courage and will power.

In "Second Class Citizen," Adah writes about how her kids provide both the motivation and the means to write. She didn't see her kids as a barrier to her writing career. She made them a part of her project. The novel "Second Class Citizen" (1974) captivates the reader with a glimpse inside her early years. She remembers that her spouse was in graduate school next to her, but not in the same building. She recalls his harsh behaviour towards her.

The author's main themes are the oppression and exploitation of women in African society. Overall, it is evident that women's status in Africa and even in Europe is extremely precarious and entirely positive. However, Emecheta gives her thoughts about African culture, heritage, and respect, as well as her love for her country, a solid and firm position in her works. Her outspoken opinions made her one of the era's most widely read novelists. Her fiction and reality are combined to recreate historical and socio-cultural aspects of the dominant civilization and its surroundings.

Adah, in *Second Class Citizen*, is a youthful lead character. Because of her gender and colour, she feels like a second-class citizen in London when she marries and becomes housewife. She decides to protect her identity by divorcing her spouse. Though they are more contemporary, *Second Class Citizen* and *Double Yoke* are nevertheless unable to shed the stereotype of women as inferior in intelligence and sexuality. Since their society promotes patriarchal dominance and their education promotes self-determination, modern women are torn between opposing ideals. Emecheta wants to show what skills African women may have if they receive an education, just like her brothers did. She can try to improve the future for her people since she is an educated African.

The main character of *Second Class Citizen*, Adah, overcomes masculine dominance via knowledge and becomes victorious. Suppression of women is a widespread occurrence. Contemporary women find themselves torn between cultural norms that uphold patriarchal dominance and educational programmes that promote self-determination. Emecheta therefore seeks to end the oppression, domination, and repression of men over women. Through her literature, she hopes to create a new society in which women may be independent, self-assured, and self-determination.

Adah has a job and is a student too who wants to be an author. However, she is single, has five children under six years' age, and is a black woman. Landlords refuse to offer her a home. The cost of child care is quite high, and her husband, who abuses her physically and psychologically, takes great pleasure in not paying even the smallest amount of child support. Adah quickly discovers that she is stuck in the quicksand of social service organisations, and that the only way to get help is to give up on any hopes of being independent. She had to quit her work, relocate into rat-infested public housing that is covered in trash, and fight the urge to accept that she will inevitably spend years on the dole in order to obtain even little public aid.

The intriguing aspect of the book is how it starts with Adah's dream of travelling to England and concludes with the protagonist getting ready to start over. In actuality, the protagonist took control of her freedom for her kids and herself. It narrates Adah's development from her initial state of ignorance to her ultimate state of independence and self-realization. She comes to understand her own liberation from all the ties inside and beyond society. She also sees how unloving Francis is. The narrative took a new path because of these two factors. She received assistance at this point from a few other characters who helped her recognise her own power and knowledge.

“Buchi Emecheta’s novels remain more on the level of individual experience and social custom with less attention to spiritual questions and implications” (Nancy Topping Bazin, March 1986, 34-40)

Occasionally, Adah exhibits the immature and naive traits that are mirrored in the stories' primary characters. The development of a young African woman's prospective position is chronicled in this book. Adah is shown as a bright, aspirational girl in the book. She is prepared to overcome the obstacles in her quest to complete her studies in Logos. She too does not have a favourable fate. Not long after she enrolls at the institution, her liberal father passes away. She was then taken to a relative's home and subjected to the same kind of abuse as a slave. Overcoming all of the issues, such as living in misery, being taken advantage of by others, and being harassed at school, Adah gets scholarship for higher studies and getting top position in school exams.

Despite all of her personal and professional struggles, she managed to land a job as a librarian at the American Consulate in Lagos. While she is at the library, she encounters Francis Obi. Their friendship served as a platform for marriage. She believed that Francis would guarantee her safety and assistance following their marriage in Lagos. However, Francis was drawn to Adah's pay and anticipated receiving financial assistance from her for his studies in Britain.

“It provides an avenue for her to fulfill her own childhood dream of going to study in England. Significantly, the novel starts with a reference to Adah’s “dream” of going to England. But towards the end of the novel, Adah fully recognizes Francis’s absolute lack of love for her as well as the need for her own freedom. At the end, she got self-reliance with self-motivation and there is a gradual development in her character in the narrator’s comment “Bill was the first real friend (Adah) had had outside her family” (p.167).

The feminist viewpoint of Buchi Emecheta's works is primarily societal and personal. Her feminist perspective is based on her personal experiences. In one interview, she claims that Adah's experiences in *Second Class Citizen* resemble her own. People think it's a waste of money to educate a girl child. She needs to act as though she lost the money her instructor gave her to buy meat in order to acquire money. Nevertheless, she is finally allowed to return to school since her degree would increase the amount of money her uncle will get as a bride price. According to traditions, Adah's mother is inherited by her father's brother upon his death. The daughter's relative keep her as a servant in exchange for her support, and she will eventually get them bride price. She eventually marries in order to just leave her house. Her spouse physically abuses her, places a great deal of restrictions on her, and forbids her from using birth control. Similar to Emecheta, Adah's marriage has collapsed due to her husband's response to her debut work. Instead of reading it, he decides to burn it. Because she is black and a woman, he believes that she should never be a writer.

Gender inequality exists when it comes to Adah's access to education. The basis of her marriage is discrimination based on gender. Adah fights relentlessly to maintain her femininity. When she leaves Francis, she feels a great feeling of relief but also loneliness and sadness. She uses her willpower to conquer the issue of loneliness and hopelessness. Despite being a normal modern-day African mother, she makes an effort to hold onto her motherhood by assuming her children's responsibilities. At the end of the book, when Francis evades his paternity obligation in court, she demonstrates her worth as a mother. She has achieved

her goal of becoming a skilled writer despite her numerous issues, both social and economic. She's shown herself to be a symbol of woman empowerment.

Despite being treated like a second-class citizen, Adah is determined to finish her studies in England. Her pursuit of knowledge is a component of her fight for independence, success, and liberation from societal restraints. Adah is able to better her condition due to her schooling. Adah has a strong sense of initiative and perseverance despite her second-class status. Her brother's schooling is the sole source of funding for her family. Finally, Adah is permitted to receive a minimal education in order to improve her suitability as a marriage candidate. Adah views marriage as a chance to realise her long-held goal of moving to England. She now realises that her early perception of England as the country of opportunity was not that true.

Adah is seen as a representation of societal male damnation and feminine difficulties. Emecheta criticises the culture for demeaning women because even the social and cultural norms of the society support them. In terms of health, education, and even basic decency, they are viewed as inferior. Everyone thinks that after getting married, things could change. However, once Adah wed Francis Obi, things became worse. She came to the realisation that all of the love and support she had received up to this point came from financial aid. The exclusive financial concerns are the driving force for maintaining family unity.

Helen Chukuwama states that, "The single most competing factor of female subjugation was her economic dependence on the female, and the social demands that made a woman give all her earnings to the home because her identity lies there"

She is aware that education may help her realise her aspirations. She came to see that education is her sole means of achieving her objective. In addition to pursuing knowledge for its own purpose, she aspires to become the best version of herself.

She exhorts women to overcome tyranny and control by daring to stand up for themselves, utilise knowledge as a means to free themselves, and escape enslavement and bondage. Equal educational opportunities for men and women should be granted. It is necessary to educate society about the value of education for girls. Men ought to support women's endeavours and their ability to contribute to the advancement of society. Women ought not to be denied access to property, education, or legal standing.

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