

ISSN INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER

ISSN-2321-7065

IJELLH

**International Journal of English Language,
Literature in Humanities**

Indexed, Peer Reviewed (Refereed), UGC Approved Journal



Volume 7, Issue 2, February 2019

www.ijellh.com

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Live to Win: A Study on women's voice in *Second Class Citizen* by

Buchi Emecheta.

Abstract: This paper explores the power of women's voice in Nigeria in *Second Class Citizen* by Buchi Emecheta. Emecheta focuses on education as the most essential tool for female empowerment. Her work portrays the experiences of African womanhood in bold and insubordinate. In this work the writer traces her life through the character Adah. Adah realizes marriage as a means to escape from the traditional bond. This study explained the journey from Ibo to London. In London they are looking for the first class job. They are treated as the second class citizen among them. The Protagonist fought with the society to gain her identity among the first class citizen. This paper highlights the powerful fight in Society Adah wages to bear herself as a child, teenager, daughter, wife and mother.

The feminist novel in Africa is part of a continuum in which Black women have for generations recorded their cultural history and values through their stories. Buchi Emecheta is the first African writer to address the issues of feminism. Her works are structured by her deep-thinking this makes the position in her identity as an African woman. Her novels mainly focus on sociological issues like black oppression in a white society, male domination and dominance of tradition. As a feminist writer she showed the images of women through the novel *Second Class Citizen*. *Second Class Citizen* accounts Emecheta's personal life through the character Adah. It marks out the struggles she faces from her childhood to adulthood.

Buchi Emecheta has expressed the difficulty of the girl child in Africa as:

In many parts of Africa only one's enemies will go out of their way to pray for a pregnant woman to have a girl child. Most people want a man child...In most African societies, the birth of a son enhances a woman's authority in the family. Male children are very important. Yet this girl child that was not desired originally comes into her own at a very early age. From childhood she is conditioned into thinking that being the girl she must do all the housework. She must help her mother to cook, clean, fetch water and look after her younger brothers and sisters... (179).

Adah finds that no one considers about her birth not even recorded but her mother cared for her brother. Adah's mother wants her to help her in the household things and not even thing about education. Her brother was send to school after that Adah willingly entered into school against the wish of her mother. Later after the death of her father now she was under the hands of her mother. She wants to stop her school because of their poverty but she was the best student in the school. Her mother's destructive approach towards her schooling would distract Adah "A year or two would do, as long as she can write her name and count. Then she will learn to sew." (4) Her mother wishes to train her brother. So, she plans to give

Adah to a man through marriage so that her mother will get a large sum of money as bride price. With the help of the money she can educate her brother. She asked a heavy bride price for Adah but she was not allowed to choose her own partner among her age group.

Adah gave more importance for education. To continue her education, she wants to stay at Lagos. As a young girl she cannot able to stay alone in Lagos that leads her to face numerous troubles. Thus she was compelled to marry Francis. He was undertaking training that was the reason for his poverty. She felt the position of poverty would make Francis to be a flexible and adjustable husband to her because she was not prepared like the traditional Igbo women. She does not know how to treat and serve their husband and the duties of the wife. So she felt this would give her a better situation among the family and a comfortable atmosphere for her to study in peace. Adah earned more money than Francis. He worked in an office for half the day.

Adah saved money to send Francis to London for higher studies. She promised him that she will come to London very soon. Adah gave more importance for education. To continue her education, she wants to stay at Lagos. As a young girl she cannot able to stay alone in Lagos that leads her several troubles to her. Thus she was compelled to marry Francis. He was undertaking training that was the reason for his poverty. She felt the position of poverty would make Francis to be a flexible and adjustable husband to her because she was not prepared like the traditional Igbo women. She does not know how to treat and serve their husband and the duties of the wife. So she felt this would give her a better situation among the family and a comfortable atmosphere for her to study in peace. Adah earned more money than Francis. He worked in an office for half the day.

Adah saved money to send Francis to London for higher studies. She promised him that she will come to London very soon. Adah stayed with her in laws and worked very hard to pay school fees of Francis seven sisters. She wants to send twenty pounds to Francis for his

expenses in London and with the balance amount she needs to take care of her children and also the whole family. Among the poorest condition she need to save money for the charge to London. She convinced her in laws to allow to fly to London and promised them that she will return to Lagos be a well settled person. She saved money to fly in first class and when she landed in England Adah becomes a second class citizen. Even though she hunted for a first class job in London. Adah got a job as library Assistant with that job she must able to raise her kids, her home and her repeated gestations. She wants to work hard to manage everything because her husband was too lazy and irresponsible man to take care of his own home. He won't go for any job. As a woman in London she took care of everything: "She cared for Francis, she wanted him to make good, she hated to disappoint him" (46).

Adah health was worst because she needs to carry the burden of financial problems. Once she was admitted in hospital during the birth of her third child. She sees the other women they are consoled and pampered by their husband but Adah was alone in the hospital during her painful delivery. After this incident she was ready to battle with him and almost ready to leave Francis. "She did not know where she got her courage from but she was beginning to fight him back, even biting him when need to" (164). Instead of leading a life with this irresponsible man she can cope up herself and her children alone in London. The only trust to lead her life is upon the job which she had in her hands.

Adah collects the courage and the bravery to walk out of the home and she was ready to manage her life by herself. She stepped out with her children and decided not to return. She finally pursues the protection from court to protect from Francis. In court Francis denies his marriage. Adah was proud of her motherhood titles that "The children are mine and that is enough. I shall never let them down as long as I am alive" (191).

Adah is welcomed at the end of the novel as the recreation of the female spirit of her people. She uses the style of modern British welfare state to stabilize her family, lecturers her

Nigerian lappa to declare her Black pride and makes unquestionable that her kids should be treated as second class citizen. But she gained her identity by gathered the courage to fight against her husband and walked out of the house with five children.

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