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## Research Articles

“A STUDY OF WOMANIST AND FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S SECOND CLASS CITIZEN ”

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**Received: 14-Jan-2018**

**Revised: 29-Jan-2018**

**Accepted: 12-Feb-2018**

### ABSTRACT:-

Buchi Emecheta is a Nigerian-British writer. She is to date the most important female African writer and is respected for her imaginative and documentary writing about African women's experience in Africa and in Great Britain. Emecheta has been characterised as “the first successful black woman novelist living in Britain after 1948”. She is the author of more than 20 books including *Second-Class Citizen*, one of her renowned works.

*Second-Class Citizen*, a renowned novel written by Buchi Emecheta set in England depicts the African community and the problems faced by them in alien lands. This novel forms a critique of the lives of black women in the first world. By linking the disadvantages of women with all handicaps of poverty, Emecheta places the experiences of her women within a broad context of social injustices in Great Britain, the West as a whole and the Third world.

The psychological hegemony wielded by the whites is replaced in the case of the women by that exerted by the males in their life. Even educated women had to conform to the traditional value system as per their law. Accordingly, Francis does not approve of Adah's lifestyle in London in *Second-Class Citizen*, “The greatest mistake an African could make was to bring an educated girl to London and let her mix with middle class English women. They soon knew their rights”.

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The part played by Christianity in giving women the secondary status is revolted against by Adah too in *Second-Class Citizen*: “Those God forsaken missionaries! They had taught Adah all the niceties of life. They had taught her by the Bible that a woman was supposed to be ready to give in to the man at any time...”

**Keywords:** Womanism, Feminism, Racial prejudice, Quest for equal treatment, Self confidence, Dignity as a woman, Socio-linguistic factors.

## INTRODUCTION:-

Buchi Emecheta was born with the full name Florence Onye Buchi Emecheta on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1944, in Yaba near Lagos, Nigeria, a country located on the western coast of Africa. She is a Nigerian-British writer.

Emecheta was a womanist and a feminist who struggled hard in her life but an unfortunate incident favoured her luck to emerge into a blossoming writer when she fell a victim in the hands of her husband who never appreciated her neither was any approval or support from his side to her for trying to be a writer. He even burned the manuscript of her first book, *The Bride Price*.

According to Emecheta, “I was the typical African woman, I had done this privately, I wanted him to look at it, approve it and he said he wouldn't read it. And later he burnt the book... and that was the day I said I'm going to leave this marriage and he said, “What for, that stupid book” and I said “I just feel you just burnt my child”. A quote fits perfectly well here, “A writer picks up his pen only when his sensibility is hurt”, her own was!

Emecheta is undoubtedly a woman who fought for her place in the world against the odds of tradition, racial prejudice, low expectations of blacks in Britain, and women in particular, the quest for equal treatment, self-confidence, and dignity as a woman. Many of her works are autobiographical in nature, feminist in spirit, and portray a place in which the cruelties of European colonization endure for generations.

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Emecheta is to date the most important female African writer, and is respected for her imaginative and documentary writing about African women's experience in Africa and in Great Britain.

This research paper will focus on Buchi Emecheta's contribution in her novel *Second-Class Citizen* particularly with her being a womanist who loved another women, appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility and freedom to be independent, not bound by the chains and shackles of exploitation and oppression. Moreover, Emecheta raises an unflinching hope in her novel as a staunch supporter of feminism.

*Second-Class Citizen* is one of the pivotal works of fiction, largely autobiographical. The novel focuses on feminism as a worldwide social theory, ideology and political movement directed at changing the existing power relations between man and woman. This work identifies socio-linguistic factors such as age, gender, religion, education, occupation and culture as factors affecting the use of language in terms of what one says and how it is said concerning feminism. It also identifies the numerous forces mitigating against the rights of African women specifically in the traditional settings and blamed them on some cultural beliefs and customs which are destructive enough to keep women perpetually at the background. This study has shown that as long as men wield power, women will continue to be subjugated, oppressed and suppressed. It therefore canvassed for equality and mutual respect between the two genders as well as the reciprocal and symbiotic reciprocal recognition of the roles of men and women in the society.

In this novel, Adah is being denied a western education because she is a girl. This novel characterizes Adah as having the initiative and determination to get what she wants- the western education being denied to her. The basic theme of *Second-Class Citizen* is one of vehement animosity at the gender discrimination that is often found in the culture of her people. Adah is also encumbered because of the gender discrimination that is the foundation of her marriage. Her husband, Francis, treats her as property. Adah is forced to support the family and is responsible for the children. In the meanwhile, Francis goes to school, studies, and continuously fails exam. Adah

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is in constant battle to try to preserve her womanhood, and when she finally leaves Francis, she experiences a strong sense of relief. This could be called the complete freedom and independence. After leaving Francis, Adah has moments of loneliness and despair but in the end she comes out triumphant because of her will power. She is equally second-class in England both because she is a black African woman and because the Nigerian immigrant community reproduces the patriarchal values of the mother country. Her quest for knowledge is part of the struggle for self-achievement and freedom from social constraints. Ultimately, it is precisely education that allows Adah to improve her condition. Through education, she is able to challenge the masculinist assumption that she should be defined as mere domestic property whose value resides in her ability to bear children and in her willingness to remain confined at home. Adah is also torn between two places, suffering from a sense of displacement because she belongs to neither.

The theme of struggle of the main character of this novel is hard and so is her survival. The society in which she lives surrounds her with many hardships dealing with the issues of race and being black in the face of English racism. We see her moving from a high class position in Nigeria to a very poor class in a white European society. She is being discriminated merely for the colour of her skin. The white people consider whites only to be superior and fit as if black lives hardly matter, most probably like, "survival of the fittest", she really seems to struggle for her survival.

*Second-Class Citizen* as fictional biography, in general is an ideological exploration of class, race and property, always with an eye towards the sociological institutions that oppress. It indicates industrial and capitalist society.

## **CONCLUSION:-**

The major concern of this research can now be restated that is womanist and feminist consciousness is one of man's most incredible challenges of life. It is an absolute precondition for nearly all social life and it is the medium through which a better society depends. The main concern therefore, is to demonstrate that *Second-Class*

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*Citizen* can reveal how women portray feminists' consciousness. Chapter five deals with a comparative analysis of feminist consciousness and identity in *Second-Class Citizen*. Having examined the interrelationship between women and men in this novel, it is our assumption that Feminist Theory is very appropriate in the study. Feminist Theory studies literature from the women liberation perspectives. Therefore the significance of the study is summarized as how to explore ideological assumptions implicit in feminism. The study also constructs the ideological slants in feminism items and shows how conclusions are validated by the analysis of feminists' theory.

In her novel, *Second-Class Citizen*, Emecheta writes about womanism and feminism. She portrays the disadvantages of women, poverty and their experiences of social injustices faced in Great Britain, the west as a whole and the Third world.

Emecheta is surrounded in a period of uncertainty, different aspects of life and ups and downs in life. She writes about feminism, projects the painful experience of motherhood, and portrays the different gender roles prescribed by the traditional culture and religion of Igbo society, practices and beliefs, religious customs, social and cultural pressures, position of women, adaptation and adoption of new values and practices, and polygamy. She has absolutely to the best of her knowledge and methods tried to explain all these things in her novels, most of them reflect her autobiography.

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