

**Quest for Identity in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen***

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**Abstract:**

The purpose of this paper is to look into individuals depicted in Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*. A book with the themes that are engaged in acts of defiance, gender identity, and other challenges. Woman is born as free as a man, but due to excessive societal rules and regulations, she is viewed as "the other" and is treated as less than the male counterpart. This is altering as women nowadays resist instead of following the norm. The search for identity is a fundamental human desire. At some point in their lives, the majority of women battle with concerns of identity and confidence. She has been battling for a long time, yet struggle transcends time or generation. The study discusses the characters' disobedience of social standards created to undermine women's equality in patriarchal society and the home, as well as their fight for gender identity.

**Keywords:** black women, homelessness, identity, marginalization, migrants.

“If any female feels she need anything beyond herself to legitimate and validate her existence, she is already giving away her power to be self-defining, her agency.” (Hooks 95) In the Igbo culture that Buchi Emecheta displays in her works, women are always being judged on the gender-based norms that the society has made for them, which puts a great deal of stress on them and makes them continually fearful of being underqualified. All of this causes identity issues for women or highlight concerns that have existed for a while but have not been addressed.

In general, women are given one of two sorts of roles: conventional or traditional, in which they must be quiet and submissive, or unconventional or radical, in which they typically defy social convention and are referred to be rebels. It's not like conventional people's experiences are any less unorthodox than those of unconventional people, but their afflictions are sanctified by patriarchal, male-

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oriented cultural standards. The radical or unconventional women suffer as a result of defying the accepted standards established by patriarchal society. Even if they challenge the hierarchy, they receive due warning, and any brewing opposition is crushed with swift effect. While social structures play a significant role in framing and imparting specific gender roles that remain with an individual for their entire lives, we can refer to these as culturally specific gender roles, norms, and socialisation if we want to emphasise that gendered identity is not entirely the result of personal choice. Because each culture has its own concepts of gender, how we identify as women or men will be influenced by the society into which we are born. Our gendered identities can vary over time, and we can exhibit various gendered behaviours at various times or in various contexts.

Adah Obi, the main character of Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, longs to visit Britain; she realises her desire and investigates the truth hidden beneath the colonial façade. Adah had a strong desire to live in the civilised world, which she saw to be Britain. Adah thought Francis was purely African. Adah's interest in colonial culture might be shown in her determination to visit Britain in spite of all obstacles. Despite all of her obstacles, Adah eventually makes it to Britain. Adah may overcome her many obstacles with education, and she can soon break away from the constraints of masculinity thanks to the economic empowerment education grants her yet Francis continues to be an aggressive and egotistical husband, while Adah is still trapped in patriarchy.

Francis becomes increasingly smug and arrogant in his relationship with Adah as a result of his inability to pass his test or get a job. Thus, the volatility of their relationship has been influenced by economic and societal conditions. Because of his failure, Francis has become resentful. He beats Adah as a kind of retribution for his perceived inferiority, belittles her, refuses to work, engages in extramarital affairs, and even forbids Adah from taking birth control. Because of their vulnerability as a result of their race, sex, and class, black women on white soil suffer more violent crimes. To Francis,

“a woman was a second-class human, to be slept with at any time, if she refused, to have sense beaten into her until she gave in, to be ordered out of bed after he had done with her, to make sure she washed his clothes and got his meals ready at the right time” (p.85)

Upon arriving in England, Adah discovers that she must struggle for rights and equality not just with his spouse but also with the Nigerian idea that all Africans—men and women—are treated as second-class citizens. The class structure presents more difficulties for black women than for men. Francis tells her,

“You may be earning a million pounds a day ... but the day you land in England, you are second class citizen. So you can’t discriminate against your people because we are all second class” (p.105)

The description “second class” has a psychological effect on Adah but, it was readily accepted by all other:

“Francis had become so conditioned by this phrase that he was not only up to it but enjoying it too.” (p.112)

All Africans were willing to accept second-class status, but Adah fights heroically against this label, refusing to accept her substandard place in society. Adah is upset that her fellow citizens have accepted the status of second-class citizens, and Francis is needed to persuade her to take employment at a t-shirt factory. Adah resolutely rejects this and instead applies for jobs where she can put her university training to use. Here, Adah feels that using the hope she has earned from her education to reconstruct her life and identity gives her a chance to contribute to the development of a more inclusive society. Emecheta is a perfect example of a strong woman in a patriarchal society because she is aware of the obstacles women face and is determined to overcome them in order to advance in society. Emecheta also highlights the crucial role that education plays in the political, social, and economic independence of women via the figure of Adah. Adah would not have been able to support the family if she had not had an education. An educated woman is liberated. “Since ages, a woman’s role in life was strictly compartmentalized; she was a daughter, a wife or a mother. In all these roles she had to adhere to certain appointed norms; she had no separate identity as a human being. She is seeking the right to be regarded human being in wholesome, not simply as an adjunct to her male relatives” (p.125)

However, Adah is so determined to combat every humiliating attitudes she encounters in her life. She only feels first-class in the library, and this is because she enjoys and is fulfilled in her "first-class citizen's job" at the American Embassy in Britain. Her employment at three different libraries helps her gradually achieve financial independence. Her financial clout, professional background, and education strengthened her resistance to Francis. For instance, she is determined to stop submitting to her spouse, especially when it comes to problems involving her body.

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