

The Adah - Upheaval in Buchi Emecheta's *Second –Class Citizen*

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Abstract

Literature and the effects on the society is manifold. It provides aesthetic needs and also reconstructs the beliefs and values in the readers. The paper entitled “The Adah - Upheaval in Buchi Emecheta's *Second – Class Citizen*” is an explicit presentation on the spirit of Adah. It also analyses the factors that gather her strength right from an ambitious girl to a strong, successful woman. The Adah-upheaval is the representation of the ever -glowing embers in the heart of every woman. The paper further traces the life of Adah and thereby a framework for comprehending the rise of Adah. It demonstrates the social factors that lay a hindrance and the unique individual character that keep a check to the same.

Keywords: Upheaval, Factors, Social and Unique.

Buchi Emecheta's *Second- Class Citizen* establishes a new tradition of written literature, a genre of revelation, from the perspective of an African Woman Writer. The advent of Buchi Emecheta marked a remarkable transition from the white writing on Black to the Black writing from their own traumatic yet revelatory experiences.

The novel is a thoughtful, daring description of the tribulations of an Igbo woman emerging from a troublesome childhood to a successful woman writer. Buchi Emecheta fathoms deep into her life to trace the Adah - upheaval. Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* demonstrates "the rooms differ so completelyfor women have set indoors all these millions of years, so that by this time the very walls are permeated by their creative force....(87)." The writer depicts Adah to life in her own natural medium of expression, eventually Adah becomes universal.

Adah Obi, the protagonist rises from the struggles and the difficulties define her. Adah's life passages through separation during childhood to the path of transition after marriage, and reincorporates to an entity as a successful writer. The dream as the writer records "she felt eight when she was directed by her dream' (1), the pursuit to London, arms her with new perception and thus enables her to unravel the difficulties and attain new heights towards the end.

Adah, the central figure is from the Ibo tribe, Nigeria. Right from her childhood she is driven by the passion for education and especially getting educated at London has been a prime motive. She, as a child gets attracted to United Kingdom when her community is getting ready to welcome Nweye, the town's first London return lawyer. The determination of Adah gains her names like "the Igbo tigress" from her friends and her headmaster comments "You're the greatest mystery the good God has created" (17). Adah is strong with the hint of effervescence that progressively ends up in reaching what she aims at. Nothing can diminish the Adah-atman, that the misfortunes redefine her.

The writer's motive is to show that education is the only way to free oneself from the clutches of discrimination. As a girl she is denied education but she is firm enough to get it by any means. Her mother hardly understands her wish and she often says, "A year or two

would do, as long as she can write her name and count. Then she will learn to sew.” (4) After her father’s death she is completely separated from her brother and mother. Again she has to fight against the ordeals at her uncle’s house to get educated. The main impetus for her will to fight is education. It is through education she becomes more independent and she gets the will to take strong decisions at different stages in her life.

She gets married to Francis Obi hoping a transition phase from the difficulties she has been enduring. She learns that it is her lucrative salary and job as a librarian at British Library lure her in-laws than Adah. She spends for the education of her family and sends her husband to London for higher studies. She is not allowed to go as the family is not ready to lose the salary, “Father does not approve of women going to the UK....Father said you’re earning more than most people who have been to England”(24). Adah knows that she has to work and wait until she is allowed.

Adah overpowers the obstacles and joins Francis at London with their child Vicky. When she lands at London the massive change in Francis shocks her more than the discrimination she faces owing to the race. Francis and their horror - housing environment make her understand that she is a second - class citizen. Francis’ angry remark makes an impression in her “You must know, my dear young lady, that in Lagos ...you may be living like an elite, but the day you land in England you are a second – class citizen” (37). Francis is irresponsible, she understands that all the hard - earned money she has been sending has gone futile.

The obstinate Adah is both the target and the hunter. She is exposed to innumerable afflictions yet the fighting instinct in her always surpass from being targeted to rising as a hunter. She shifts from one job to another subsequently yielding to the desires of Francis and fulfilling the duties as a mother and wife. She makes her own way and at certain instances she

deserves pity when she is surmounted by irredeemable situation yet she a strong individual bounce back. She devotes herself to her passion and this differs her from other. She never wants to be inferior “they believed that one had to start with the inferior and stay there, because being black meant being inferior. Well Adah did not believe that wholly, but what she did know was that being regarded as inferior had a psychological effect on her” (71). She is blessed with “the highest mental achievement” (Freud) and has the will to win fame and name.

Adah is the representative of the strong breed and “no coloureds” initially tests her confidence. She builds her up gradually and she transfers the energy into the creative process of writing. Her experiences make her see things with a clear perception. She understands the human nature with the people she encounters, like Trudy, Bill and Peggy and remarks that there are bad and good whites. The fight of Adah is not ordinary as she has to rise against the traditional norms and also the colonial subjugation. The economic independence she has rightly helps her in being decisive and assertive. She could shun away the identity of a second-class citizen as she firmly evolves from the status of a victim to a victor. It is evident that the metamorphosis is not magical but by sheer determination to chase her dream.

The moment Francis burns the manuscript of her novel, the already turbulent heart surmounts the submissive state. She leaves Francis as separation is the only way for a better future for her and her kids. Adah when she was young strongly wanted to be independent and “she would never,...get married to any man,... to whom she would have to serve his food on bended knee:...she would not consent to live with a husband whom she would have to treat as a master....she wasn't going to” (14). She is repudiated at many instances, instead she takes all those as a process of mutation and thereby emerges as a successful woman. Adah's decision is the result of the bold, self – reliant character that emulates the determination in

every woman. The indelible impression Adah leaves is the result of the revolt against the discrimination in various forms.

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