
Self-actualization of Adah in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*: A

Humanistic Psychological Approach

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Abstract:

Culture, communication and identity are the base of any literature. Identity is never very important in life until it is lost. It is this loss that leads to constant struggle and all the characters suffer from crisis of identity in the absence of strong culture. Loss of one's culture or identity becomes an emotional driving force in characters' lives to perform any action to recover his/her identity. Loss of identity leads to psychological disorder and one fails to focus even on daily basic needs. The struggle for an independent and cultured identity makes one realize his/her capabilities and gives him/her courage and strength to fight all odds. To achieve self-actualized identity it is necessary that basic needs i.e. Physiological need, safety and security need, love and belongingness need and esteem need are to be fulfilled because a hungry and homeless man can never think of struggling for identity. The main motive of this paper is to analyze Adah, the protagonist of Buchi Emecheta's adorable novel *The Second Class Citizen* through Humanistic Psychological Approach and it also studies how Adah fulfills all her basic needs step by step and ultimately succeeds in her struggle and emerges as a self-actualized being with an identity of her own.

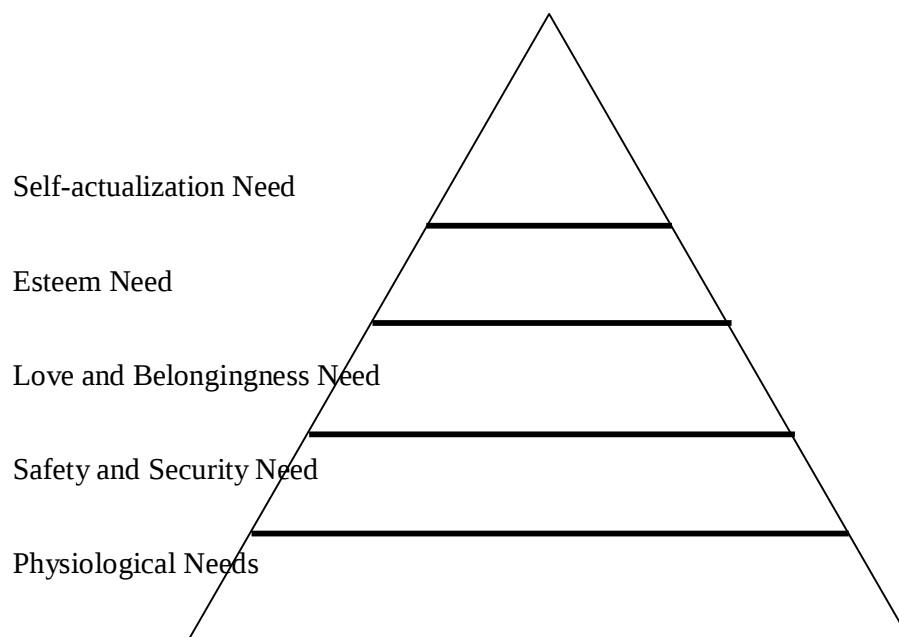
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Two American Psychologists Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers paved way for Humanistic Psychology during 1970's and 1980's. The focus of both psychologists was to oppose certain facts i.e. behavior is determined by the unconscious (Freud) and behavior is determined by the environment. For Carl Rogers focus of psychology was how individuals perceive and interpret various events and not behavior and environment. Humanistic Psychologists embrace human freedom and forces of self-actualization. Humanists also lay their focus on the view that human behavior is not objective but personal and subjective. They avoid the methods which study human behavior objectively. Humanistic Psychologists study person as a whole and the element of uniqueness in him is given due importance. Humanists support free will to take decisions of choice and of choosing a way of one's interest. Humanists also support that every individual has a tendency to grow in any aspect he wishes to provided he feels Positive Self Regard i.e. he respects his own self and has confidence that others also respect him unconditionally. Rogers had faith that an individual can grow psychologically if he has unconditional positive self-regard but Maslow talked of growth through fulfillment of needs at various stages of life in a satisfying manner.

Every human being has certain needs at different stages of life and their fulfillment becomes a goal. Reaching a goal at a particular stage of life forces a man to struggle and success in struggle leads him to attainment of Self-actualization. Maslow presented a Theory of Self-actualization or Theory of Hierarchy of Needs in a paper *A Theory of Human Motivation* in which he puts forth the hierarchy of needs of humans from basic to ultimate. According to Maslow, these needs are to be

fulfilled at right time i.e. neither too earlier nor too late and if in any case so happens then the desire to become self-actualized or we can say a creative and perfect being leads to failure. Maslow said that when basic needs are fulfilled at right time in a satisfying manner then urge for fulfilling other needs arises until man attains the ultimate need of being self-actualizer.

Maslow represents his list of hierarchy of needs in the shape of pyramid moving from bottom to top. This pyramid consists of five(5) levels with Physiological needs at bottom and Self-actualization i.e. psychological need at top. All the five(5) levels are to be attained step by step from bottom to top, one can't jump from base to top.



The Hierarchy of Needs

1: The Physiological Needs: These needs are basic needs and lie at bottom of pyramid. They include hunger, thirst, air, sleep etc.

2: The Safety and Security Need: once physiological needs are fulfilled urge to attain safety and security need arises. It focuses to keep one safe from any sort of physical and emotional harm. It includes security of all sorts like family, employment, health etc.

3: The Love and Belongingness Need: Human being is called a social being i.e. man can't live in isolation and needs someone to live with or socialize with. Thus, when physiological and safety and security needs are satisfied fairly then hunger for affectionate and selfless relation arises. These affectionate relations not only satisfy need of love but certain desired and suitable relations fulfill urge for sex also.

4: The Esteem Need: When a person leaves behind dreamy world and comes to realistic phase of life, the desire of high esteem arises in him and he gives his best and does all good jobs in society so as to be respected by others and provided with high esteem. One can't think of respecting his own self or others with empty stomach so, to arouse esteem need one must first of all attain above three needs. It is attainment of esteem needs that leads one to a life of confidence and satisfaction.

5: The Self-actualization Need: This need lies at the top of pyramid and thirst of its attainment arises only when other basic needs are attained satisfactorily. This is different from others because it is a psychological need and leads to desire of more and more growth. It is the need of one to become a complete being or one can say a perfect being with no or minor flaws. It makes one aware of his hidden potential and

capabilities towards more and more development and puts forward the fact that development is continuous and thus unending. Self-actualized being is a perfect and creative being who has everything to lead a happy life. "Self-actualization happens because of motivation to get achievement in society by realizing their potencies as optimal as possible. Only by actualization there can be people who live truly an authentic life" (Hjelle & Ziegler 444).

In subtle and clear words and keeping in mind Maslow's Theory of Self-actualization, an imperfect being can become self-actualized only when his needs are satisfied from base to top at the right time because if so doesn't happen one would concentrate on satisfying the basic needs and can hardly move forward towards other needs in due time.

Second Class Citizen is a bildungsroman i.e. a novel of personal development of an intelligent and ambitious young girl Adah, the protagonist. From the very beginning Adah is seen to be struggling for her certain personal needs especially the most important one i.e. education which in turn is important to realize other important basic needs especially self-actualizing need. Adah is basically an unwanted child not because her parents don't want a girl child but because they want boy as their first child and Adah is born against this wish. Disappointed by her birth she doesn't receive a fair treatment.

Since Adah belongs to a middle class family and her father is a job oriented person in Lagos so, her physiological needs like hunger and thirst are satisfied in a proper manner without much struggle. Now Adah moves one level up for safety and

security which initially is also satisfied because of her liberal father but God has something else in store for her and unfortunately her father unexpectedly embraces death leaving her whole life shattered. Following the tradition of Nigerian society her mother is inherited by her Pa's brother and her only boy brother was to live with one of Pa's cousin and all money in family was to be spent on boy's education and Adah like most of orphan girls was to live with her mother's elder brother as a servant. After entering her maternal uncle's home she felt a sort of insecurity as no one there was bothered whether she lives or dies, whole family was happy that they have got a servant free of cost. Adah struggles a lot to fulfill her needs in a proper way and thus, devises a way of higher education and sits in an entrance exam after arranging money by telling a lie and getting a hard beating, ultimately she succeeds and gets a scholarship and shifts in boarding. "Since then she started to be overawed by the presence. It existed right beside her, just like a companion. It comforted her during the long school holidays when she could not go home, because there was no home for her to go to" (Buchi 23).

After spending five comfortable years in boarding she enters a real but unsafe world and for her security she chooses marriage and job as a source. After her marriage with Frances not only her safety and security need is satisfied but her love and belongingness need is also satisfied. She is loved not only by her husband but by her in-laws also because of her handsome salary of which she is unaware and simultaneously her need of legal sex is also met at right time. Being an intelligent, ambitious and earning lady i.e. a lady of beauty with brains she lives a life of due respect in Lagos and manages not only her expenses but also of her husband and in-

laws and is thus, treated with high esteem by whole society including those relatives who treated her worse than a servant. It has been well said that growth leads to urge of more growth, same happens with Adah who is not satisfied with all this and decides to leave for United Kingdom to earn more respect and more comforts. She persuades her in-laws to let her go to United Kingdom to join her husband Frances who is a student there. In United Kingdom whole life turns upside down, there she can hardly realize her true worth and is almost swept away by her husband dominated relation. She does all to keep her husband and children happy and in comfort. After all the discomforts she faces because of her husband, her conscience ultimately rises and she comes face to face with her real strength and flourishes it by raising a voice and leaving her freaking flawed husband behind and moves on with her children to live a life of free will and respect and utilizes her potential not to satisfy needs of her lazy and selfish husband but her own self and her young children.

Thus, Adah after facing a lot of hardships ultimately emerges as a perfect and creative being with all doubts removed and almost all needs satisfied with due importance on ultimate self-actualized need.

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